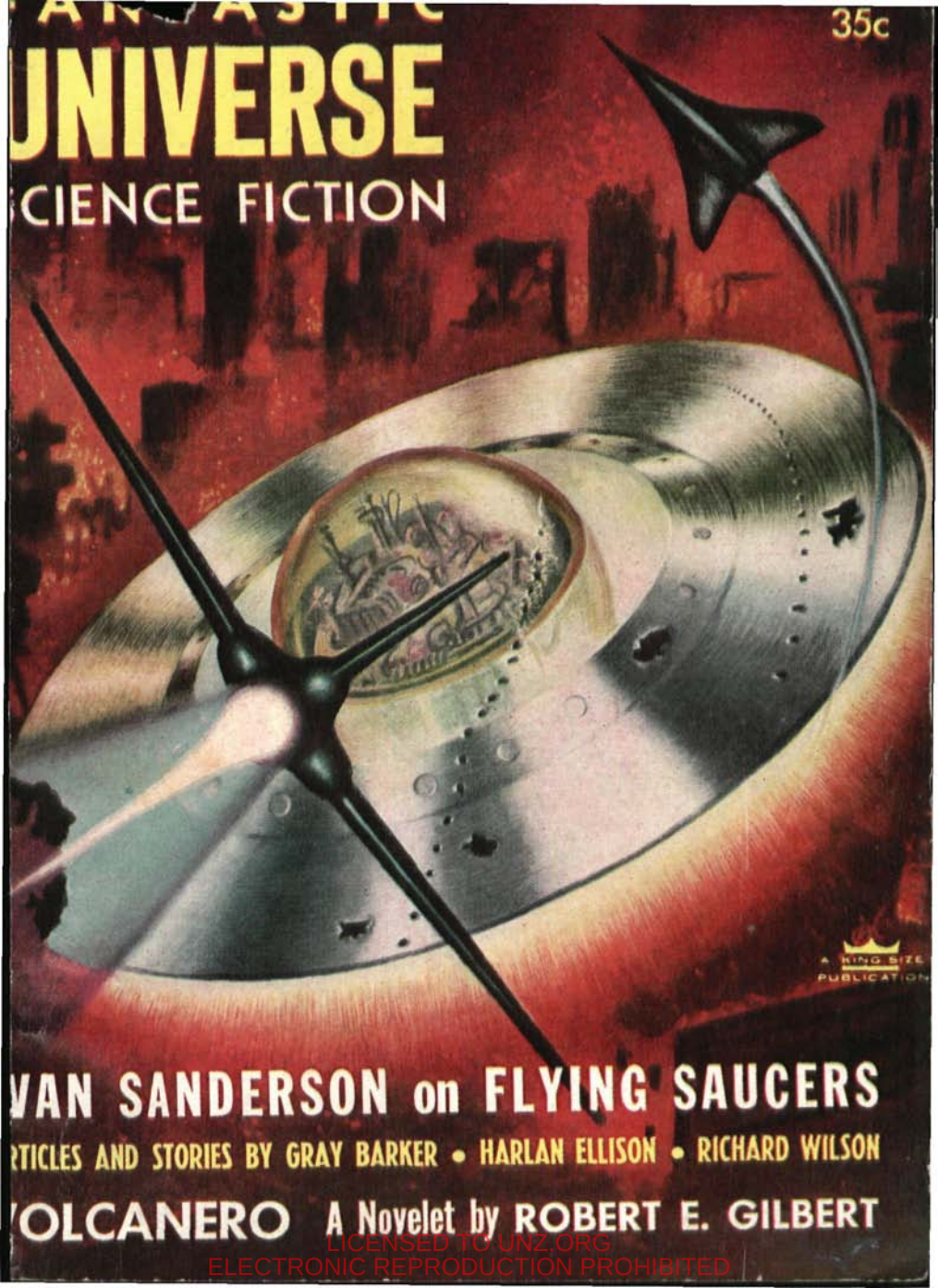
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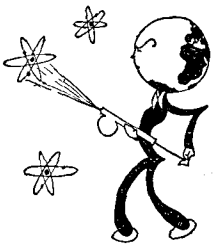

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volcanero

by...ROBERT E. GILBERT

Metal was becoming too scarce to use for small buildings. Plastic was expensive and unsatisfactory. And so men would risk their lives...

SYLVIA TAPP wore the cool, loose, white sun-robe common to volcaneros, but she enlivened the costume by tucking it into a green sash tied about her waist. She grimaced at the radiophone and said pleasantly, with nasal overtones, "Hello, Mr. Gissom! How—"

"Mrs. Tapp," said M. E. Gissom, general superintendent of Inferno Incorporated, "is it true that Varma Monto is erupting?"

"No, sir. Varma Monto used to erupt in a twenty-two year cycle, but it's now considered dormant. There's been no eruption in almost thirty years."

"The earthquake!" Gissom yelled. "Damn the geology! I have a report on an earthquake up there at 0800!"

Sylvia held the vibrating receiver away from her ear. "Yes, sir," she admitted. "There was an earthquake." She motioned to young Luke Nelson, who hovered over the electronic seismograph, and the boy handed her a notebook. "The P wave ar-

Robert E. Gilbert has written an extraordinary story of a profession that will very likely have its share of the headlines a few hundred years from now. A strange and exciting profession, volcanology attracts the new kind of adventurer for whom a challenge—even a deadly challenge like this—has the attraction a stir in the shadows had for Conan the Cimmerian. This is not a story for those readers who believe that heroism, in the century after next, will be the exclusive prerogative of the adequately chested male. Volcanero will startle them. Others will enjoy it!

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rived here at 0757 and thirty-two seconds," she said. "The S wave came twenty-six seconds later. Penick says the quake was off the coast about 152 kilometers northwest of here. Someone is probably having a high tide."

"Why isn't that volcano erupting?" Gissom demanded.

"They don't always, after an earthquake, Mr. Gissom. Take the Sagami Bay quake that destroyed Yokohama in 1923. Fuji and Asama are both in the area, but neither blew, and Asama is the most active crater in Japan. Sometimes—"

"I didn't ask for a lecture. How much damage did it do?"

"It wrecked large areas of Tokyo and killed—"

"I mean up there at Varma Monto!"

"No damage, sir. Just a quiver. We're still picking up Rayleigh and Love waves, but—"

"Pull up the lava drill!" Grissom ordered. "Shut down the powerhouse! Your attitude this morning isn't helping you, Mrs. Tapp! You know I was opposed to placing a woman in such a responsible position as Chief volcanologist. How much farther to the sill?"

Sylvia said, "About twenty meters. The drill stem broke and we—"

"I don't want any more excuses, Mrs. Tapp. If the first batch of lock-blocks isn't aboard *The Inferno Queen* on Monday morning, you may find yourself seeking other employment. And don't let that volcano erupt! Goodbye!"

Gissom disconnected. Sylvia sat down. The morning sun, raying through the windows and s p l o t c h i n g the white sillar walls with brightness, raised few highights in her abundant hair, once a brillant auburn, but now the color of pale, gray-streaked rust. At the moment, as Sylvia punched the radiophone switchboard, she seemed older than her thirty-eight years.

"Kashokuno?" Sylvia inquired of the phone. "Pull up the drill and shut down. Orders from Mr. Gissom." She pressed another button. "Hernandez, check with Kashokuno. As soon as he's shut down, stop the dynamos. Close all the steam valves. Put the radiophone on batteries."

Sylvia stood up, placed her hands on her broad hips, and glared at Luke Nelson, whose freckled face personified attention. "Are you going to look at that seismograph all day?" she said. "What kind of vacation is that? Go collect mineral specimens, or something."

"Mr. Penick told me to watch it," Nelson said.

"Go!"

Nelson grumbled out the door.

Sylvia turned to Edith Miller who pointedly worked

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at microfilming reports. "You may have Vincent Penick for a boss before long, Edith," Sylvia said. "He and Gissom are old buddies."

Edith's hair was short and dyed in equal strips of red, white, and blue. She weighed only forty-seven kilograms but lived exclusively on a diet. "Gissom makes me sick, talking to you like that," she said.

"Do you always monitor my calls?"

"Only when it's Gissom. He's feeble-minded. First, he sits down there in Lima and tells you to stop drilling, and then he says to have a shipload of blocks ready in five days. You can't do both."

Sylvia stared through the wide windows. "That's no way to talk about your superiors," she mumbled. "Why do I insist on being a volcanologist, Edith? Why don't I teach geology in a nice, quiet school-home somewhere? I've already lost two husbands in this business—Luke cooked in lava, and Andy scalded in steam. I've got a scar on my rear that would take a plastidoc a year to fix. You should see it."

"I've seen it," Edith said. "Gissom may calm down and call back."

"He'll find another way to fix me, if he does," Sylvia said. "He didn't like Andy, and he doesn't like me. I never understood it."

"He doesn't need a reason."

"I'll end black-listed or in a school-home, whether I want to or not, so why don't I resign?"

"There's why." Edith pointed at the window.

Viewed from the office building, Varma Monto, a dark gray cone composed of layers of ash and lava, heap-layers of ash and lava, heaped up 350 meters above the surrounding slopes and tinged with the green on moss and grass, dominated the northern horizon. What appeared to be foothills around the base of the strato-volcano were actually the remaining, eroded walls of a more ancient cone that had exploded a thousand years before.

Edith said, "You like it. It fascinates you. I remember when I first became a volcanero—that was at the Geysers near San Francisco—I was scared to death of all that steam! But now, I couldn't work except around a volcano or, at least, a fumerole. Some people love dogs, and some love orchids, but I guess you have to be a volcanero before you know Earth is almost a living thing. It's like a pet. You keep wondering what trick it will do next. If you—"

"Go dictate a book," Sylvia suggested. She covered her blue eyes with white-rimmed sunglasses, worn low on her slightly concave nose, and thrust her bare feet into

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short, thick-soled boots. She touched the seismograph and said, "Tell me if this starts acting up again." After jamming on a big coolie hat and hanging a talkie on her shoulder, she left the office.

Sylvia walked across a broad area of corded lava that had solidified in troughs, waves, and billows but created an unpleasant impression of viscosity. Beneath the dark gray flow to have to start feeding you twisting for three kilometers up the slope to the cone, older flows—red, bronze, and black—protruded in overlapping tongues.

Skirting a sheet of glistening, dark glass with greenish tones, Sylvia walked through a deposit of volcanic ash, where a few bushes grew, and climbed a roughly hewn path to the tall lava well derrick. On an elevation at a relatively safe distance from the well, Vincent Penick and Tokuzo Kashokuno stood in the control shed. Kashokuno's tan face was impassive, but Penick's features were flushed, and his arms flapped like wings in the loose sleeves of his sun-robe.

"Chatting?" Sylvia asked.

P e n i c k sputtered. Kashokuno bowed and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Tapp. You are feeling well, I hope. Mr. Penick insists that I run the drill again. He has stopped the hoist."

"Start it," Sylvia said. "We're only following Mr. Gissom's orders, Penick. He gave no reason, as usual, but the earthquake seems to have upset him. He's probably afraid there'll be some shifting. A few sections of drill stem might be broken and cost the company a little money. You take over here, Penick. Kashokuno and I may do some blasting."

The top of Penick's head barely reached the level of Sylvia's mouth. He said, "I'm assistant volcanologist, not a driller!"

"Penick, with only six of us in this Division, we're all drillers. You know how to work that switchboard, don't you? Push the little buttons and the whole things runs itself. Be sure to close the casing head valve nice and tight when you're through. Coming, Kashokuno?"

The driller followed Sylvia along a path beside the casting shed. Within the tall, skeletal structure were racks of lock-block molds. The shaft of the lava well was being sunk toward a magma sill, a sheet of molten rock extruded from the batholith, that had fed Varma Monto, and lying between sedimentary layers parallel to the surface of the ground. Once the magma was reached, it would well from the shaft as molten lava and flow through huge pipes to the molds,

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where mechanical pressure would keep it from cracking while cooling. The racks contained molds for tongued-and-grooved wall blocks, corner blocks, window blocks, door blocks, and floor blocks in a great variety of shapes and sizes. Small houses and buildings could be rapidly constructed with lock-blocks and little mortar.

"Kashokuno," said Sylvia, "what do you think of these fifty-year bans on cutting timber?"

They passed the terminal of the beam-train which, moving on a form of monorail elevated on reinforced stone pillars, could haul a load of lock-blocks over the sixty-seven kilometers to the ocean in fifteen minutes. When the Varma Monto Division of Inferno Incorporated was in full operation, other volcanic products, such as sulfur, boric acid, pumice, and quarried sillar, would follow the moulded blocks to the coast. The streamlined electric engine and freights cars glinted in the brilliant sunlight.

"The timber bans are excellent things, Mrs. Tapp," said Kashokuno, as they crossed the corded lava. "I am convinced that much of Earth would be a desert in one hundred years if the forests were not allowed to recuperate, particularly in North America."

Sylvia said, "It's all so true, but some people, whose names I've recently mentioned, are tickled purple because it means they can get rich. They don't care if we have to live like old-time Arabs. They're happy because, with all the space programs and Pluto expeditions, metal is becoming too scarce to use for small buildings, and plastic is too expensive and unsatisfactory. A fifty-year boom for lock-blocks! Only minor initial expense! Drill a hole, and up comes unlimited, free molten rock." Sylvia glanced at a puzzled Kashokuno. She grinned faintly. "I shouldn't be talking like this, should I? After all, people need houses, and I make my living by—"

A sound like steel drums filled with empty oxygen flasks and rolling downhill rumbled through the ground as much as through the air. "Now we have it!" Sylvia whispered.

They stopped near the middle of the lava flow. Before them was the powerhouse in which dynamos, turned by steam turbines powered by four volcanic steam wells supplied electricity to the lava drill and the beam-train, and would power the elaborate automatic control system that would make human operators almost unnecessary in the completed Division. From several fumeroles near the powerhouse, white tendrils of steam con-

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trasted with the clear blue sky. One fumerole suddenly spouted a sizzling jet.

As if a giant lay hidden beyond the horizon and alternately tugged and shoved the Earth, the ground seemed to jerk back and forth. Sylvia executed an ungainly, unrehearsed dance and fell, scraping her hands and knees on the rough lava. Kashokuno managed to keep his feet long enough to perform a creditable jig; then he, also, fell and rolled.

The rumble ceased, and the tremors lessened to a faint vibration. As Sylvia stood and frowned at her lacerated palms, Edith Miller trotted up he slope with one hand over her mouth and the other in her red, white, and blue hair. "Mrs. Tapp!" Edith shrieked. "The seismograph is making zigzags all over the place!"

"How odd," Sylvia commented.

A rattling roar like a distant spaceship crashing into a rock pile during a thunderstorm drowned further opinions. This time, the lava underfoot seemed to bounce up and down. "Drop!" Sylvia yelled and sat.

Edith's squealing added a high note to the subterranean clamor. Fragments of black basalt tumbled down the slope. Volcanic sand puffed into the air. The quaking lasted perhaps fifteen seconds and again subsided to a discernible quiver.

Again Sylvia stood up. She massaged herself. "My old wound is aching," she said. "That's the nice thing about staying around a volcano. If nothing else, there's always an earthquake to keep things moving."

Edith sat on a mound of pillow lava. Rough outcroppings had damaged her sunrobe. "Are you hurt, Edith?" Sylvia asked, walking unsteadily down the slope.

"A bruise or two," Edith said. "I'm scared to death!"

"Who isn't? We're going to have to start feeding you more, girl. Your ribs are showing."

Kashokuno wheezed and forced a smile. "It knocked out my breath" he gasped. "It was not as severe as the Great New York Quake! I was on Thirty-Fourth Street when—"

"Now don't go hysterical on us, Kashokuno," Sylvia said. She pushed her sunglasses up her nose and retrieved her coolie hat. "Nothing broken, either of you? Good. Kashokuno, it looks as if we'll really need to do some blasting now. Those embankments should have been built before anything else, but the company is always in a hurry. If old Varma Monto doesn't blow now, he never will, and I'm afraid he will."

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Edith clutched the torn edges of her garment and started down the slope. She said. "The office must be a mess."

"Be careful about going inside," Sylvia called after her. "I can see a crack all the way up the wall."

"Earthquake! Earthquake!" Vincent Penick squeaked. He sprinted along the path and staggered to a stop. "I kept hoisting through the first shock!" he panted. "I—"

"Did you pull up the drill and shut down?" Sylvia interrupted.

"Yes! I risked my neck staying there—"

"Undiluted heriosm," Sylvia said. She pressed buttons on her talkie. "If this thing isn't broken," she muttered, "it'll be a miracle. Hernandez? Hernandez?"

"Yes, Mrs. Tapp?"

"Are you all right? How's the powerhouse?"

"The main valve on number Two Well is leaking slightly. Otherwise, no severe damage."

"Good. Shut down as instructed and meet us at storage."

Sylvia pressed another button. "Jones?" she called. She repeated the name several times but received no answer.

"I will go see," Kashokuno said. "Where is he?"

"He's supposed to be scraping dirt off the sulfur deposit, but I can't see him from here. Too many buildings in the way."

Sylvia's talkie whined and sputtered, and a faint voice came through. "—turned over —shovel's all—Mrs.—"

"Jones, I can't understand you!" Sylvia said.

The talkie crackled. "—repeat—damage—the bulldozer is—"

Sylvia switched off and said, "Hurry down there, Kashokuno. His talkie must be smashed. He may be hurt." The driller loped away. Sylvia turned to Penick. "Run along to storage," she said. "Find all the Composition 12 we have, and plenty of fuses, and some drills. If Jones is hurt, bring a tractor over yourself."

"But—"

"Go on! Hurry!"

Sylvia turned and carefully surveyed the scattered buildings and structures of the Division. The lava well derrick had tilted a few degrees to one side. The beam-road and train seemed intact. Several metal braces dangled from the mold racks. Not one, but two cracks marred the white wall of the office building. The controls building, which, alone, was steel-framed and earthquake-engineered, apparently was unharmed. Cracks marked several plastic windows in the bunkhouse, and the door of the messhall hung by a single

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hinge. One of the ornithopters had rolled to the doorway of the hanger by the small landing square. The fumeroles near the powerhouse steamed more violently than usual. The sky remained a bright, transparent blue.

"It could have been much worse," Sylvia muttered. She gasped. "Are you still here, Penick?"

"Yes," said Penick, twisting his neck to look up at her. "I don't like the way you conduct yourself, Tapp, no more than M. E. Gissom does. If you'd used a little sense afer that first quake this morning, Will Jones wouldn't be lying dead down there."

"He isn't dead! Go do what I told you, Penick."

Penick opened his mouth for additional words, and it stayed open while a battery of atomic artillery evidently commenced firing. Sylvia whirled.

From the crater of Varma Monto, a white cloud spurted and climbed in writhing convolutions. Billows of dirty brown and black appeared in the twisting mass. Fragments of basalt and bits of breccia arched outward. A stunning explosion rent the sky and shook the ground.

Over the rim of the crater, a wriggling, flaming mass appeared. The emulsion of blazing gases and dust, heavier than air, swelled into a vast, ragged, orange and yellow ball and swept down the east slope of the cone.

"A Peleean!" Penick squeaked. "We'll fry!" He fled toward the office, fell, tumbled, and regained his feet to run faster.

Sylvia stood and watched the cloud of fire, that took its name from an eruption of Pelee on Martinique in 1902. The caustic mass from Varma Monto rolled at a right angle to the direction of the Division. Before the gas reached them, trees and brush exploded into burning brands. As the cloud began to grow dark and flattened, a head wind engulfed Sylvia.

Steam, rising from Varma Monto, climbed higher and higher. Red traces of iron oxide appeared in the twisting, tenuous branches. Huge gas bubbles, bursting thunderously in the crater, hurled great blocks over the rim. Small fragments, termed lapilli, fell on the slope near Sylvia, and volcanic ash and dust sifted down from a sky turning gray.

A few meters toward Varma Monto, there opened the entrance to a cave created when fluid lava had escaped from under a hardening crust. Luke Nelson crawled from the cave.

"The Prodigal Son returns!" Sylvia exclaimed. "You picked a fine spot to be buried. I've been worried

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silly about you. I told you to hunt mineral specimens."

"That's what I was doing," Nelson said. He gaped in awed fascination at the eruption and made appreciative sounds.

Sylvia said, "Take a long hike somewhere." She turned Nelson around and steered him toward the office building. Lapilli, some of it hot, showered them, "Run along, Luke," Sylvia said, "before we start getting bombs."

"Aw, I never have any fun," Nelson grumbled, breaking into a wild gallop down the grade when Sylvia shoved him.

Sylvia's sun-robe flared, and her long legs flashed, as she ran east across the flow. Her commodious chest expanded and contracted rapidly with the effort by the time she passed between the and reached the storage building.

Hernando Hernandez, a swarthy giant, stepped out the door with a case of Composition 12 under either arm. "Is Penick here?" Sylvia wheezed. "Know anything about Jones? He didn't—Oh, here they come."

"I haven't seen Penick, Mrs. Tapp," Hernandez rumbled.

Sylvia spoke into her talkie. "Edith, bring the map of Varma Monto to storage. The big relief map. It's in the cabinet by my desk."

"What a mess this—" Edith said before Sylvia turned her off.

The sun, halfway to the meridan, formed a pale yellow disk almost invisible behind a thickening fog of dust. Will Jones and Tokuzo Kashokuno hurried through the fog. Jones, who always walked as if all his joints were swivels, wore a bandage on his right arm. "Bulldozer reared up in the quake, turned over," he told Sylvia. "Banged up my talkie."

"What about your arm?"

"Nothing. Little cut."

"We're lucky, so far," said Sylvia. "I don't know where dear Mr. Penick is. He wasn't wearing a talkie. We'll carry on without him. Varma Monto hasn't given out with any lava yet, but, if he does, we're standing on an old flow, and we'll probably be knee-deep in the stuff in less than an hour. The sensible thing to do would be to move as much equipment from here as we can and watch the show from a safe distance, but, of course, people who drill holes next to volcanoes aren't very sensible to start with."

"We will stick," Kashokuno said.

Sylvia said, "I'm not ordering anyone to stay. Volunteers only. I'd think more of your intelligence if you run for the coast."

"Never was very smart," Jones said.

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"Also me," Hernandez agreed.

Sylvia smiled for the first time that day. She had one iridium canine tooth. "All right. If the molten lava runs down here, this Division is finished no matter how much equipment we might move. Plans were drawn for channels and embankments to divert possible flows, but, in the rush to start production, they haven't been built. Old Varma Monto may erupt for weeks. We're going up there and try to do some helpful blasting. If lava comes, we'll have to keep at it as long as it lasts."

"Get the big tractor," Jones announced, moving off into the dust.

Stepping over boxes jumbled by the earthquake, Hernandez and Kashokuno entered the storage building. Varma Monto rumbled madly. Scattered fragments rattled on the roof.

Edith Miller had exchanged her torn robe for a golden balloon-blouse and red slit-slacks. She carried a rolled map. Luke Nelson followed her. "Where's the party?" said Sylvia, taking the map. "Thanks."

"All my other robes are in the cleanser," Edith said. "I—"

"Stop leering at Edith," Sylvia told Nelson. "You're much too young. Now listen, both of you. The rest of us are going up the mountain. You two clear out of here. Go to that farm about two kilometers south."

"I can't desert you, Mrs. Tapp!" Edith protested. "You haven't enough help now."

Nelson said, "I'll help!"

Sylvia unrolled the map and glared at them. "To quote a Twentieth Century humorist," she mumbled, "everyone wishes to enter the act."

Nelson laughed. "I was reading that book last week, *Radio Scripts of James Durante*. You didn't say it right. It's—"

"Be quiet. All right, Luke, you're chef for the day. Go to the messhall and have some lunch ready about noon, but don't bring it to us. Call me."

Kashokuno came out carrying steel helmets, with thick interior padding, and goggled respirator masks. "Fix up Luke and Edith," Sylvia said. "Go to the messhall like a good boy, Luke. If you feel another big quake coming, get out, or the ceiling may fall on you. Run along. I've no time to argue."

Will Jones guided the tractor across the corded lava. The big machine's solar-electric motors whined softly. "Where's the top for that thing?" Sylvia called.

"Not one."

Sylvia exhaled in irritation. "No oxygen masks, no

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infrared goggles, one asbestos suit," she enumerated. "Nothing but Inferno Lock-Blocks, thirty for a coupon." She shouted through the doorway. "Bring that fire suit and find a new talkie for Jones!"

Swiftly, the volcaneros adjusted helmets and respirators and loaded cases of L2, fuses, drills, and tools into the square tractor bed. Kashokuno brought two water bags and hung them behind the seat. Sylvia spread the map on the ground, and the men knelt around her.

Sylvia pointed. "Here's the cone, and here's the old crater wall. This low place in the wall is where the lava poured through thirty years ago. The east side of the old crater is probably still hot from the gas cloud, but there's a good spot on the west side, here, to blast an outlet."

"Kashokuno and I will mine the gap and try to block it. Hernandez and Jones, you two blow the outlet. Let's go. Does that arm bother your driving, Jones?"

"No."

With Jones in the seat and the others in back, the tractor clattered on heavy steel treads between the bunkhouse and messhall. Volcanic dust hid the sun. The tractor moved up the rise through a strange mid-morning twilight. Varma Monto was a dim silhouette, and the towering pillow of steam and rock particles could be distinguished from the haze only by its darker color. The cone belched and threw up blackened clots. Falling lapilli and ashes tinkled on steel helmets and on the tractor body. Earth tremors added to the rocking of the vehicle on the uneven ground.

Sylvia discovered Edith Miller sitting demurely on a case of explosives. "I told you to stay in the office!" Sylvia screeched in unfair competition with the loud voice of Varma Monto.

"But you didn't, Mrs. Tapp. I have my talkie on the outside wavelength. I can take any calls."

"Don't talk back to me! You— Oh, well, you have as many insurance policies as the rest of us. You can stay with me."

Edith studied the shovels on which her feet rested and said, "I think I'd like to go with Hernando."

"Now Cupid rears his ugly head," Sylvia said.

The straining tractor crunched through thin sheets of volcanic glass with red and blue tints dulled by a layer of white ash. The treads squeaked and grated when the tractor left the glass and attacked an area of aa lava, ragged blocks from a crust that had formed over the molten rock thirty years

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before and had then been broken and carried downhill. The hastily loaded cargo slid from side to side, entangling the volcaneros.

When the hood pointed at a forty degree angle to the sky, Jones said, "Can't go much farther." A piece of hot, black basalt slid against the right treads. Jones twisted the wheel, and the tractor's left track scraped between two huge b l o c k s. Gears growled, and metal gnashed at rock. "Think we're stuck," Jones said.

"We didn't expect you to climb the cone," Sylvia said, pushing Hernandez off her knee. "This is far enough."

The tractor shuddered and stopped. A drill and a pick grasped Kashokuno's legs with animate cunning and, but for an agile somersault on his part, would have deposited him on his head in the aa. "We have no time for jujitsu demonstrations," Sylvia said. "Is there more L2 in storage?"

"No, Mrs. Tapp," said Kashokuno, cautiously gripping the spiteful pick.

"Save one case. Let's get at it. There's no sign of lava so far, but— Plant your charges and meet back here."

Burdened with equipment, frog-faced in their respirators, Jones and Hernandez stumbled to the left, into the gloom. Sylvia heaved a heavy drill to her shoulder and gripped a case of L2 under her other arm. Bent almost double under the load, she picked a torturous path upward t h r o u g h the jagged rocks. Kashokuno followed with pick, shovel, a box of fuses, and another drill and case of explosives.

From a distance of less than four hundred meters to the foot of the cone, Varma Monto towered enormus and awful. Not a trace of green remained on the slopes. Constantly increasing heaps of dark gray bits rimmed the cone and tumbled in minor avalanches. The decayed-albumen stench of hydrogen sulfide infiltrated the hot and dusty atmosphere. As Sylvia and Kashokuno laboriously climbed to the opening in the ancient crater wall, they advanced through a downpour of ash, lapilli, and blocks. A block the size of his hand rang on Kashokuno's helmet. He shook his head vigorously and walked onward. A smaller block rebounded from Sylvia's shoulder.

"That was hot!" Sylvia squeaked. "If— Kashokuno, where's Edith?"

"She followed Hernandez, Mrs. Tapp."

"I hope they'll be very happy together."

Floored with black basalt, the rent in the stratified wall around Varma Monto was seventy-five meters wide and

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fifty long. Strata of basalt, breccia, and tuff rose to a height of fifteen meters on either side of the little valley.

Sylvia dropped the drill and the case behind a boulder and performed peculiar contortions to relieve cramped arms and back. "Looks bad," Sylvia observed. "Even if we blast both sides down, it may not be enough to block this gap. Why didn't the company plug this place long ago? If the hot stuff comes roaring through, it'll bury the Division and shove it halfway to the coast. You take that side."

Varma Monto bellowed. A fountain of red-orange molten rock haloed by blue and greenish flame sprayed above the cone. Red-hot lava bombs rocketed into the black piller of steam and descended in meteoric flight. The cinders at the top of Varma Monto rolled away or were consumed by a fiery, golden trickle that had been born thirty-five kilometers deep within the crust of Earth. The trickle widened to a stream and slithered down the incline with a sinuous movement like that of mastic on a slanting roof.

Sylvia yelled, "No time to drill! Dump half those fuses in this case! Hurry, but be careful! Stick the L2 in any likely spots! When that lava starts through, clear out fast!"

As Kashokuno darted away, Sylvia shouted into her talkie. "Jones! Hernandez! Lava! Put the L2 anywhere and go back to the tractor!"

"Mrs. Tapp!" Edith Miller cried. "Mr. Gissom is calling from Lima!"

"Tell Gissom to—" Further instructions were lost in an explosion from the volcano. Sylvia ran into the gap, into dim, uncertain light. "Come to beautiful Central America, land of enchantment!" she raved. "Hot running lava in every room! Completely ash-conditioned atmosphere!"

As more erupted particles whirled into the air, darkness increased. Slapping at hot fragments that settled on her dirty white robe and started it smoldering, Sylvia reached the opposite end of the gap. The lava, picking up a broken head of cinders and rock, had extended to the bottom of the cone. On comparatively level ground, its pace slowed, yet it moved forward irresistibly, groaning and creaking like some fantastic snake. The color had darkened, at the forward end of the flow, to a cherry red splotched with black bits of cooling crust and spangled with blocks which preceded it like the moraine of a wierd glacier.

Opening the case, Sylvia took out cubes of Composition L2 wrapped in red and

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white checked plastic. She jammed the explosive into crevices and depressions and thrust a radiofuse into each charge. When she had mined the entire wall of the little valley, she piled the three remaining charges, looked back at the lava which had almost entered the gap, ran, and crashed into Kashokuno.

"Oh, sorry!" Sylvia said. Kashokuno picked up her fallen helmet. In exchange, Sylvia slapped out a minor conflagration on the driller's shoulder. "Burned bad?" she asked. Kashokuno shook his head. His respirator was gray with dust, and a blister swelled on his neck.

Sylvia said, "Scared as I am? Good! Grab that drill and the tools. I'll take this one."

Running was impossible in the rugged aa flow, but they walked rapidly. Visibility had dropped to a few meters, for a dusty night descended before noon.

"Mrs. Tapp," Edith Miller called, "Mr. Gissom says he's coming up here from Lima. He's at the spaceairport, and—"

"His red carpet is ready," Sylvia said. "It's sliding down the mountain."

"Hey!" another voice interrupted through the talkie. "Luncheon is served!"

"What?"

Luke Nelson said, "Luncheon is served., I did—"

"Eat it yourself and get off the air!" Sylvia said. "Edith, try to call Managua and get some more L2, or Compositon B, or TNT."

"Yes, Mrs., Tapp," said Edith as they met in the haze.

"Small planet," Sylvia commented. Jones and Hernandez appeared like dusty ghosts.

"Not sure we did much good," Jones said.

"We're trying. Can you move the tractor out?"

With limbs dangling from loose joints, Jones swung into the seat, kicked debris aside, and started the motors. The left track, suspended between the two huge blocks, growled and screeched impotently. Piles of loose fragments, heaped against the bed, quivered. Dust puffed into the dirty air. Jones said, "Afraid we're stuck. Have to dig."

"There's not time," Sylvia said. She rinsed her mouth, and drank from a water bag, and handed it around. "All right. Leave the tractor for the lava. Give me that detonator and bring that case. We walk."

The volcaneros groped and stumbled until they reached the volcanic glass sheet. Sylvia instructed them to lie down. "Try not to cut yourselves," she said. "Here goes." She closed the switch of the radiodetonator.

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Two lights, followed by two blasts sharper than the guttural groaning of Varma Monto, flashed in the darkness. A few fragments, joining the output of the volcano, tinkled in the glass. Sylvia raised her head above a block. Except for the glow of the growing lava stream on the side of the cone, Varma Monto was invisible.

Sylvia said, "I'll go see if that helped. The rest of you move down the hill and get off this flow if you see the lava coming."

"I will go instead," Kashokuno volunteered.

"Check the west side," Jones said and loped away.

"Such a bunch of insubordinates! Stay here, Kashokuno, and help carry these tools. Go down about a hundred meters and start placing charges. Save some, though." Sylvia returned to the aa lava.

"Anyone with IQ 50 would have brought flashlights," Sylvia mumbled. "Anyone with IQ 25 wouldn't go within sight of a volcano. If I don't stop talking to myself, I'll be in the hands of the psychodocs by morning, if I'm still with us in the morning."

Sylvia fell twice in minor earth shocks before she passed the stranded tractor. A strained rattling and creaking came from the gap ahead. Sylvia jumped tensely. A broad chain of volcanic lightning, red through the dust, struck the top of Verma Monto amid the sharp popping of strange thunder.

Accompanied by the glare and crackle of a lightning barrage, Sylvia fatalistically climbed the eroded side of the archaic crater wall and looked down into the gap. The illumination of lightning and lava slightly improved visibility. The Composition L2, a slowly reacting explosive, had crumbled, instead of shattered, the rock and, causing two landslides, had thrown a tumbled heap of basalt and breccia across the opening. The crude embankment, however, measured not more than two meters high in the center.

The lava coming down Varma Monto remained a light orange at the outlet. Thin tendrils of red lava constantly burst through the accumulated darker material at the front of the flow, and the entire mass, that already filled the little valley from side to side and grew steadily thicker, slowly consumed and pushed the blasted barricade.

Sylvia scrambled down from her perch. Mud began to fall. The gargantuan cloud of steam from Varma Monto, condensing to water tinged with floating dust, poured upon the blighted ground. Fresh white steam hissed

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from the doused lava and added a sizzling noise to the tumult of the implacable advance.

When she could no longer see through her mud-splattered goggles, Sylvia removed her respirator and let it dangle about her neck. Mud dripped and splashed from the rim of her helmet. Matted hair flopped in filthy ropes down her back, and her sun-robe, as if smeared with paste, adhered to her suddenly chilled body. "If there's anything to mud baths, I'll soon be beautiful," Sylvia decided, although in the discord of gurgling mud, snapping thunder, and moving lava, she couldn't hear herself.

Muddy water ran in miniature torrents through the innumerable cracks and crevices of the lava. Sylvia blundered through, and the volcanic glass, slick and wet crumbled under her scuffed boots. The clatter of a drill led her to a slimy hulk which judging by its size, must be Hernandez. The small mess standing nearby was Edith whose blouse no longer ballooned. Mud trickled through the slits in her slacks.

Sylvia sat on the blubbering ground. "Back and forth, back and forth. I'm worn out," she sighed. Louder, she said, "did you reach Managua, Edith? The gap isn't closed very tight."

Edith said, "I finally contacted Interplanetary Engineering Equipment. They have no explosives, but they'll send some from Panama."

"Mr. Gissom will probably be here to explode first,"

Another figure, apparently crudely constructed of saturated dirt, materialized in the downpour. The voice of Kashokuno came from the specter. "I have mined a billow to open a gully," he said.

Hernandez stopped the battery-powered drill and said, "We've used half the charges Mrs. Tapp."

"Save the rest. Where's Jones?"

"I seem to hear him shouting," Hernandez said. The huge man threw back his head and bellowed answers to a faint call.

Will Jones splashed into the group. "Almost lost," he said. "Lava's coming through the outlet, some. So much steam, couldn' see much."

Sylvia wiped her face and slung the mud aside. She said, "I'm afraid the lava's got us. It'll gobble up that puny landslide across the gap. Once it does, here it comes." She paused, frowning, and rubbed off more mud. Slowly, the rain abated. A bright hint of a sun illuminated a spot in the clouds.

"There's a last chance," Sylvia said. "Bomb the crater. That's a fool's errand if I ever suggested one."

Edith said, "I'll call World Security in Mexico City. They'll send a bomber—"

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Sylvia shook her head. "They wouldn't be here before Sunday afternoon, going through channels, even if we could talk them into it. No, I'll have to do it. I'll set the radiofuses for minimum proximity and throw the L2. The only thing is, I'll need a pilot, and I can't ask any of you to go. Varma Monto's throwing out fewer blocks and settling down to spewing lava, but, to get close enough to do any good, it'll still be like flying into an old-time anti-aircraft barrage. I guess —"

"The lava!" Hernandez exclaimed.

With the slackening of the rain to a muddy mist, the strange mid-morning night had brightened to a gray dawn, and the gullied slopes of the old crater appeared as a darker gray. Lava, red, and black, and steaming, oozed through the opening that Sylvia and Kashokuno had tried to secure. Increasing in size, the vanguard of the viscous rock already stood three times the height of the abandoned tractor facing the assult alone.

"One volunteer!" yelped Sylvia, leaping up and almost falling as her foot slipped.

"I'll go!" Edith squealed. "I can pilot! The men will have to stay here and blast!"

A large, thick, hard arm encircled Sylvia's waist from the rear and lifted her off the ground. She clanked helmets with Edith who was held by a similar arm. Kashokuno and Jones grabbed several cubes of L2 and ran wildly down the corded lava flow.

Desperately, Sylvia tried to thrust her hands between the rigid arm and her yielding waist. She lashed out with her right heel against a shin stolid as a steel post. "Break it up!" Sylvia gasped. "Put me down! I couldn't catch them now, if I wanted to!"

Hernandez gently replaced Sylvia's feet on the ground. Still clutching Edith, he bowed and entoned, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Tapp. We couldn't allow two women to undertake so dangerous a mission while we remained here. I would gladly have gone, but I am the only one capable of restraining both of you."

"If that's a compliment, it's the oddest one I ever heard," Sylvia panted and massaged her ribs. "What are you, a bunch of telepaths? Put Edith down!" Hernandez apologetically released Edith, but she did not change her position by so much as a centimeter.

Sylvia snorted, "Ha! Female equality!" She turned and squinted through the thinning mist. From the vague blur of the hanger and landing square, the shape of an ornithopeter detached itself and flapped upward like

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a great streamlined beetle. "Kashokuno and Jones," Sylvia sighed. "Good luck, both of you."

"They were a fine pair of volcaneros," Edith said.

"Don't talk like that! Get on out of here, Edith. Go clean yourself up. Meet Mr. Gissom when he comes. Tell him we gave our all for dear old Inferno Incorporated."

"But—"

"Don't argue, and keep an eye on the lava."

"Goodby, Hernando," said Edith tearfully. She ran.

"Quit standing there goggle-eyed, strong man," said Sylvia, "and let's leave this place before we have hot rocks up to our ears."

Silently, Hernandez loaded his shoulders with tools and the nearly empty L2 case. He followed Sylvia in the direction of the powerhouse. Streamers of sunlight pierced the dispersing cloud from Varma Monto. The lava welling from the cone now formed a curving stream one and a half kilometers long and two hundred meters wide. Steam hissed and shrouded the liquid basalt. The fragments preceding the molten flow clattered and rattled.

"How many places did you plant charges?" Sylvia asked.

"About four, Mrs. Tapp," said Hernandez. "They should be of some help, although—"

"We'll try it. If we can break that lava into enough separate streams, we have a chance of stopping it, if those two score any hits on the cone."

With wings almost invisible in flashing arcs, the ornithopter buzzed from the gray cloud and then banked and turned back into the scattering mass. Sylvia said, "If they don't run into carbon monoxide or catch too many blocks, they may make it. This should be far enough." Sylvia yelled at her talkie, sprawled in a recess recognized too late as being filled with mud. She operated the detonator. L2 exploded in four simultaneous blasts. One burst occurred against the wall of groaning lava. Boulders tumbled down into the blasted depression. The bed of the immersed tractor clanged from the face of the flow. A trace of slithering red seeped through black cinders and widened into a stream that surged aside into a shallow gully.

Above the now insignificant rumble of Varma Monto, equally spaced explosions boomed. The ornithopter reeled out of the cloud. The left wing flapped more slowly than the right. A streak of black smoke trailed the wobbling aircraft.

Sylvia stood biting encrusted fingernails. The ornithopter passed thirty meters overhead. Cracks twisted in jagged patterns across the canopy. Two sections of the fringed tail dangled askew. The landing stilts all but

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touched the roof of the mess-hall. Between the ornithopter and the hanger moved the cumbersome hulk of the power-shovel in indecisive progress. Flapping violently, the ornithopter buzzed past the shovel, dropped on the square, bounced, and tilted over on its nose.

"Who's driving the shovel?" Sylvia yelled. She started running.

Hernandez pounded after her. "Mr. Penick?" he suggested.

"Could be—" Sylvia stopped. "They seem to be in one piece. They're climbing out." Sylvia yelled at her talkie. "Are you hurt? Jones! Kashokuno!" She turned to Hernandez. "Give me yours. This one is full of mud." Hernandez pulled the strap over his head and handed the little radio to her. Sylvia called again.

"We're fine," Jones answered. "Ornithopter's in bad shape. Got the worst from one of our own bombs. Blasted at least three new outlets. Lava's running down the north side through them."

Sylvia looked at Varma Monto. Although the lava continued to undulate, the tail of the stream at the top of the cone had turned black. "You did it!" Sylvia screamed into the talkie. "It's stopped flowing on this side! If we can keep it out of the buildings, we have it licked, until the next eruption. Jones, I guess you and Kashokuno know you're fired for insubordination—temporarily. Now, hurry up here and help us."

The bright gray sky faded to blue. Sunlight sparkled on wet volcanic glass and on pools of muddy water trapped in holes and furrows. Heat waves simmered above the steaming, moving lava. No longer did the flow present a solid wall in front. The exploded charges had opened gullies that had been plugged by old, solidified lava. The molten mass thrust hot fingers into these openings, but a general movement continued downhill toward the Division.

Sylvia looked up at the sound of a motor in the sky. "Maybe it's the explosives," she murmured. "No, it's just a Tridie News copter. We're down to our last round, Hernandez. You take the rest of the L2 to that ravine about half a kilometer up this side of the hot stuff. Try to blow some of it into there. That lava is crusting fast. The rain probably cooled it slightly. If we can slow it until a good crust forms, that'll do it. Don't get burned. I'm going after that runaway shovel. We can try to dig in a few soft places."

Slumped with fatigue, Sylvia started toward the buildings more than a kilometer away. A streaking dot, that was a rocketplane moving far ahead of the sound of its engine, passed along the

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western horizon and turned in an extensive bank to the north. The plane came back, almost passing through the white tendril steaming from the top of Varma Monto. It was a fluorescent-red amphibian with rectangular, adjustable-gap, biplane wings. The flaps were down. Flame spouted from the braking rockets. As the rocketplane passed, aiming for a landing in the distant ocean, Sylvia yelled, "Hello, Mr. Gissom!" Noise thundered and receded after the dwindling plane.

Sylvia took two steps and stopped as if petrified. The tall derrick of the lava well stood in a spreading puddle of glowing orange. Sylvia pressed her dirtyface in her hands.

Vincent Penick panted up the slope. The assistant volcanologist's short legs carried him jerkily over the rough ground. "Lava!" he squalled. "Lava!"

"Surely not," Sylvia said. "Where have you been, Penick?"

"Someone had to stay and look after the company's valuable equipment!" Penick heaved. He gestured toward the lava drill. "Lava pouring out! The earthquake must have opened a fault and let the magma rise from the sill into the shaft! It's all around the control shed!"

"Did the casing head blow out?"

"No, the lava is coming through the pipe!"

"Penick, I told you to close the casing head valve when you hoisted the drill! Why didn't you close it when you saw lava? There's an emergency battery!"

"Why, I—"

Sylvia's voice became a vibrating nasal twang. "Look at you! You didn't even get wet in the rain! You ran and hid! We almost had the lava stopped, but now it'll run into the casting shed, and that's the end of Varma Monto Division! You ran and hid while Kashokuno and Jones almost got killed bombing the cone!"

"I'll see that they both receive medals," Penick jeered.

Sylvia swung a clenched hand at Penick's face. Penick dodged the tired blow, tripped backward over a basalt billow and rolled a few meters down the slope. "I'll tell Gissom!" he snarled.

Sylvia stepped past him and broke into a tired, jarring trot. Far up the slope, Hernandez blasted, but Sylvia did not stop to look. Wheezing, she trotted along the towering, open sides of the casting shed and up to the path. Drawing in air hoarsely, ploratory tentacle of running rock twisted beside the path. Drawing in air hoarsely Sylvia paused. Her knees knocked involuntarily together. Puffs of heat swept over her.

If the lava well derrick had not been made of a rhenium alloy, it would have melted

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in the red pool that surrounded it. With but little accompanying gas, the lava swelled out and over the casing head like an illuminated fountain in slow-motion. The little control shed was momentarily safe on an island in a spreading, coalescent pond. "Luke!" Sylvia screamed. "What are you doing?"

The great powershovel, with its treads barely clear of the lava, squatted as close as possible to the island. The lowered boom stretched across the seething lake, and the open dipper door rested on the rock beside the control shed, forming a makeshift bridge from one point of high ground to the other. Virtually unrecognizable, Luke Nelson crouched on top of the cab. The boy had thick gloves on his hands and a towel about his face. Blankets, evidently soaked in muddy water, transformed his body into a shapeless bundle. "I'm going over and close the valve," he said in a muffled, unhappy voice. "This shovel travels so slowly, I didn't think I'd ever get it up here, but—"

"Luke, come down from there!" Sylvia commanded.

"But—"

"I'll thrash you! I'll forbid football! I'll make you take dancing lessons!"

"Aw, Mother, why—"

"Come down!"

"All right, Mother," Nelson groaned. He crawled to the rear of the cab, swung off, and dropped to the ground.

Sylvia said, "I saw your father die in lava, and that's enough. Who taught you to operate a shovel? Didn't I tell you to fix lunch in the messhall."

Nelson pulled the towel off his freckled face. "I did once," he complained, "but you—"

"Do it again! This time, we're really hungry."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get the asbestos suit. No, I guess we left it in the tractor. Give me those blankets."

"I'm not going to let you kill your—"

Nelson revolved like the proverbial flying saucer, as Sylvia snatched at the slopping blankets and unwound them. She said, "More lava pours out every second! This is no time for arguments!"

Sylvia unstrapped the two talkies and hung them around Nelson's neck. She wrapped her legs until they were bulbuous and swathed her arms and torso in three more blankets. She covered all of her head, except her eyes, with the wet towel and worked her hands into the gloves. "Leave!" she told Nelson. "It was clever to bring the shovel, but there's nothing lse you can do."

Approaching the powershovel from the back, Sylvia climbed upon the high tread. She reached for the roof, but her fingers slipped on the

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curving surface. She walked forward on the tread. Heat from the molten stream danced around her. The blankets steamed. Grasping an operating cable, Sylvia swung from the tread to the hot metal of the shovel boom.

Nelson shouted something. Far down the glinting single rail of the beam-road, a car raced toward the Division.

Holding to cables, Sylvia walked up the boom, which, in its lowered position, formed but a single angle. The soles of her boots stuck to the steel. She reached the complicated connections of the dipper sticks to the boom, ran wobbling down the right-hand stick through blinding heat to the bucket, and jumped from the bucket to the ground beside the control shed.

Half fainting, Sylvia lurched into the shed. Her gloved hand fumbled with a switch and closed it. The thick diaphragm valve in the casing head, activated by radio control, closed ponderously, squeezing out a last spurt of lava. Sylvia turned off the battery.

Somehow, Sylvia climbed back up the dipper stick, passed over the red-hot stream, and reached the ground on the other side again. Luke Nelson and Edith Miller helped her discard the steaming, smoking blankets. Sylvia, puffing and blowing, sat down. "Old Indian custom," she gasped. "Cake the poor fish with mud, wrap it in wet leaves, and roast in hot ashes."

"Are you burned badly?" Edith cooed.

Sylvia pulled off her boots and displayed her hands. "Blisters," she said. "I'll probably survive. I didn't know you were a blonde, Edith."

"The dye came out when I cleaned my hair. Mrs. Tapp, that was the bravest thing I—"

"Not now, Edith. Are the others all right?"

Nelson said, "Mr. Jones called, Mother. They're fine. He says Mr. Hernandez diverted some of the lava into that ravine you selected. A crust is hardening over the main flow, and—"

"Stop talking like a volcanero." Sylvia looked over her shoulder at Varma Monto from which nothing but a whisp of stem ascended. A tiny whirlwind played about the cone. She said, "It may have been his last fling, or old Varma Monto may erupt again in an hour. She pulled a talkie, with Nelson attached, toward her. "Jones?" she asked. "Good work, all of you. Bring everyone and start rigging the pipeline from the casting shed. The well blew, but it's shut now. If the lava around here hasn't cooled enough by tomorrow, we'll bridge it. Be ready to mold lock-blocks tomorrow afternoon." She switched off.

"Gisson is in the office, Mrs. Tapp," said Edith, try-

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ing to administer first aid. "He said for you to report immediately. Penick is there with him. Oh, Mrs. Tapp! Gissom can't fire you and black-list you now! He can't listen to Penick after Penick ran away and left the valve open. You'll have his shipload of blocks by Monday morning."

"There, there," said Sylvia. "I'll be all right. After all, Mr. Gissom gave me orders not to let Varma Monto erupt, but Varma Monto erupted and destroyed a valuable company tractor."

"No one can—"

"Not only that. I tried to hit Gissom's good friend, Mr. Penick."

Timidly placing her weight upon her blistered feet, Sylvia descended the path and limped across the corded lava. M. E. Gissom. general superintendent of Inferno Incorporated, filled the doorway of the office building with his bulk and watched her approach.

UNFINISHED STORY

Venerable Brother!

I have tonight come from a gathering of the heathen Bogomilii, those foul heretics who not only boast of worshipping Satan here in Toulouse, in this year of our Lord 1011, *but who talk of centers in Milan, in Florence, in Orvieto and elsewhere, and of the many great people who crowd their foul midnight ceremonies. . .*

There in Italy they are said to meet in open air, on mountains or in the depths of some lone valley. But here in Toulouse, they meet in the crypt under the ruined Abbey of St. Jerome, celebrating the Consolamentum at midnight, the members standing in a circle around a table covered with a white cloth, their eyes glittering with zeal for their Master Satan, the torches burning behind them. The service is closed by the eldest one present reading the first seventeen verses of their damnable transfigured gospel. Bread is broken, as the voice of the presiding elder is stilled, but I hesitate to describe with what mockery of our sacred rites. And I hesitate—

. I am cold. I am shivering with cold, so much that I can hardly hold the quill as I write this, and I fear that this is not a natural chill. I fear that Death has marked me for her very own, in anger at my trespassing on these satanic mysteries and lest I tell all I know... My thoughts wander, and I remember a spring morning, so very long ago, when I walked in the fields—and I—

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an introduction to ufology

by...IVAN T. SANDERSON

What *are* possible explanations for the various kinds of UFOs? Are they living entities - or from other galaxies?

GHOSTS have been with us since the beginning of recorded history. Unfortunately they are not only disembodied, but highly elusive things that have proved, after several millenia and despite what anybody may say to the contrary, to be impossible to catch, keep, measure or weigh, or even to photograph. As a result, though probably more than half the people in the world today believe in their existence, they do not exist *in fact* and, mostly as a result of their not being amenable to measurement and weighing, no established Science will accept them as subjects suitable for investigation.

The same may be said about another vast assortment of phenomena.

These are the many "things" that could in appropriate circumstances be measured or weighed if there happened to be anybody around at the time of their appearance capable of doing either, but which are otherwise almost as elusive. These

Ivan T. Sanderson, distinguished naturalist and author, turns to a question asked by hundreds of thousands WHAT ARE THE UFOs? Distinguished explorer, well known for his radio and TV programs, author of numerous works including the recent FOLLOW THE WHALE (Little Brown), LIVING MAMMALS OF THE WORLD (Hanover House), HOW TO KNOW THE AMERICAN MAMMALS (New American Library), and CARIBBEAN TREASURE (Viking Press), Sanderson brings a trained scientific mind to the study of this important question.

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could probably best be called *Forteana* after the late Charles Fort, who spent a lifetime collecting records of their occurence. They are of an altogether more concrete nature, such as fires that break out spontaneously hour after hour and day after day all over a single house, hunks of angular ice with icicles depending therefrom that land on highroads in broad daylight, and other such incidents that are customarily attributed to what is called "Poltergeist manifestations".

Now, among Forteana there is one very large category of alleged happenings, involving *things* of a particularly difficult, or *obnoxious* (to many people) nature. These are what Charles Fort called "Objects seen Floating in the Sky", or OSFS as they were once somewhat endearingly known. According to a very wide variety of chroniclers, ranging from fairly ancient Chinese historians to Roman Augurs, the authors of the Bible, august members of the Royal Society of England, Peruvian peasants, and members of the United States Airforce, an enormous number and variety of such unorthodox objects have been seen in our atmosphere throughout the centuries. Unfortunately, however, these things, though apparently susceptible to photography, and which usually show up on radarscopes (at least, according to the Airforce), are almost as elusive and unsubstantial as "ghosts", because they have steadfastly refused to lay themselves open to being caught, measured or weighed.

For these reasons they have been either wholly discounted, pointedly ignored, or crowded into a special limbo created for their reception. Although an appreciable percentage of the population of the earth has apparently seen, or believes he or she has seen, at least one example of such an Object, the damned things are still generally regarded as nothing but a myth. Apart from being copy for an occasional newstory, they have no worth, for they too do not belong in any established Science. As a result, they have for centuries been ignored by the learned, treated as "signs" by the superstitious, or as mere natural phenomena by uneducated though often more enlightened primitives. Today they are regarded as a public nuisance.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the then rather new, fresh, and eager discipline called "science" became somewhat interested in these phenomena and reported many of them in its more august technical journals. However, as the things continued to elude capture they first became a bore, and then a confounded nuisance

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so that they were entirely dropped. Nobody, except a few very odd types, who seem to have been born with a desire to make themselves unpopular, deigned to so much as mention them, though reports of their occurrence continued to flow in at a steady pace. It was not, in fact, until men became thoroughly scared about hostile bombers, and radioactive clouds drifting about over their heads, that anybody dared question the nature of these obscenities that apparently wander about in our atmosphere. The man, Kenneth Arnold, is to be greatly complimented for having jeopardized his career by asking somebody to do something about a number of such shining, lenticular-shaped items that he said he encountered while flying over the area of Mt. Rainier.

The results of his modest request are now history. A whole new category was added to mass news coverage; strange new words like "Flying Saucer" and "Ufo" appeared in dictionaries; military and other departments of many governments started spending millions of their taxpayers' money on "investigations"; a few publishers somewhat enhanced their slender profits; and all kinds of people, from airline pilots to Romanian peasants, began *seeing things*.

All of which brings us to the pertinent question: are there such things or is the whole business a combination of hallucination and imagination?

If it is all from imagination, we have to start with some editing of the Bible and sundry early Chinese, ancient Egyptian, many mediaeval and other texts, a drastic revision of a large number of scientific journals, and the immediate censoring of several recognized astronomers, and the prompt suspension from duty of quite a significent percentage of professional airline pilots. What has to be done about military personnel is, of course, none of our business except in so far as we pay for its maintenance and equipment, but a lot of dismissals therefrom would seem also to be in order.

If the business is *not* wholly imaginative, it can only mean that there *are* Unidentified Flying Objects buzzing about in our skies. We cannot have it both ways. Moreover, if there are such things, it is high time that somebody did something constructive about them. But what to do?

What, anyone may well ask, can you do about something that isn't there? If you can't examine or handle a thing, how can you categorize it or start to study it? Well, neither our own subconscious nor extra-galactic nebulae are any more available for

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handling but quite a lot has been—or is alleged to have been—discovered about both. Just because you can not readily get your hands on a thing does not mean that it cannot be recorded, investigated, and above all, classified. We would be in an even prettier pickle than we are now if, for instance, physicists had refused to study or accept the existence of neutrinos just because they can't see them and have the utmost difficulty in weighing and measuring them. Charles Darwin might just as well have abandoned all his ideas at the outset because nobody could loan him a skeleton of an Ape-Man. The basic trouble with UFOs, at the moment, is that there is no assigned place for them in any branch of Science.

The meteorologist certainly doesn't want any unknown thing seen in the sky; he has quite enough to do as it is, and he deals with only certain broad aspects of our atmosphere *per se*. The astronomer wants no part of anything within our atmosphere and, frankly, wishes that the beastly atmosphere itself would go away so that he could get a clearer look at the stars without glimmer or shimmer; besides, his machines are focussed on points far beyond the atmosphere's outer limits. He doesn't like unidentified dark object floating serenely across the Moon or the Sun either, and has very often said so in no uncertain terms. Physicists, chemists, and other such prosaic folk have no dealings with anything in the atmosphere except the gases of which it is composed. Cosmologists are way beyond the clouds, and the rest of the sciences are earthbound—except for one, namely Biology, and this is very loathe to soar much higher than 25,000 feet, at which altitude some birds have been known to fly. The technologists are even less concerned. If anybody caught a UFO, they would doubtless swarm all over it, but in the meantime they rightly adhere to testing things they can handle, and gadgeteering generally.

In other words, science doesn't want any part of anything in the sky that ought not to be there, and they are jolly well going to see to it that if there are any such things aloft, they stay there until somebody else produces one on a platter for their edification. This is all very sane and practical but it does not help very much.

If this whole business is what is vulgarly called "balony"—though why, for there could hardly be a more satisfactory comestible on the market—we very badly need a pooling of psychologists, social scientists of other

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kinds, and the executive branches of our own and many other Governments to examine the heads of a large percentage of our collective populations, including those members of our Airforces empowered with the expenditure of public funds (for projects like those named "Blue Book", *et alia*). This sort of nonsense must be put a stop to and wastage of energy, nerves and money, now spent upon it, eliminated. The millions spent annually today on this ridiculous matter by newspapers, book publishers, and public officials is quite preposterous. On the other hand, it is high time that scientists and the great organizations that support them devote some funds to counteracting all this hysteria by a sane investigation and appraisal of the matter. Up till now, scientists almost alone have backed away from the question, and those that have deigned to recognize the problem have devoted their energies to ridiculing it or trying to explain it away.

But can we blame them? The matters at issue have no place in their routines of diciplines. What is more, working scientists already have far too much to do, are nowa-days constantly harassed by both officialdom and the public, and are grossly underpaid for the enormous responsibilities they have to shoulder. Persons who have scientific training but who do not earn their living as scientists are few and far between. There is, therefore, virtually nobody available to deal with anything that does not fall into the bailiwick of some established science.

Nevertheless, the dictionary still defines science as the "investigation of the *unknown*", and if something suddenly pops up in life, nature, or the universe that has not previously been known or recognized, there is therefore no possible excuse for its being left lying around uninvestigated. Further, when such phenomenon have already appeared on the horizon there is a very urgent need for a science to be immediately founded to so investigate it. Such is definitely the case with the Fortean phenomena, now so succinctly named UFOs or "Unidentified Flying Objects", by our Airforce.

If the UFOs are not all illusory, what are they?

The possibilities—if we are to be really scientific about the matter—are almost endless. The limits of the Universe in space and time are unbounded. Just because "life" as we know it exists only between 0 and 100 centigrade on the surface of this planet is no reason that another form could not do so at at eight million degrees ab-

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lute in the center of a star or at absolute zero in inter-galactic space. Just because our bodies are based on hydrogen and carbon does not mean that "life" may not be based on other elements; it might even be crystalline! Just because we are *here now* and our ancestors were more or less, *there then*, does not mean that we cannot be *there now* or they, *here then*. We have hardly a clue as to what is going on a mile under our feet, and we know darned little about what lives two miles down in the oceans of our planet or what may exist a few miles above us in our atmosphere. We can only see just so far upwards with one lot of instruments and beyond a certain point with others. There could be countless hosts of things buzzing about up there that we cannot see at all, for our eyes are sensitive to only a limited segment of the full spectrum. What is more, neither living entities nor even inanimate objects need be solid; they could be liquid, gaseous, or composed of what so many people like to call "forces" meaning presumably compositions of electromagnetic wave-particles of orders other than those with which our nuclear physicists are currently fiddling.

The range of possibilities being so great, it is a hard task even to start trying to bring order out of the present chaos.

Nevertheless, if we are ever going to get anywhere with this business it is high time that we make a start, and it would be best to do so where the other sciences started. This is by establishing some basis for the purely descriptive phase of our study. Before anybody starts theorizing about the objectives of UFOs, it would be worthwhile to devote a little time to the establishment of a framework of reference for the classification of such objects. This calls for the setting up of a series of pigeonholes for the reception of data, which should be named and grouped according to the multifarous possibilities inherent in the possible nature, composition, origin, *etc.*, of UFOs.

First, therefore, every effort should be made to list all the possible or rather thinkable explanations for the various kinds of UFOs so far reported. This calls for a large number of binary headings, such as, could they be "living entities" or are then "inanimate"; are they individuals or parts of larger composite entities; are they from our planet or from another in our solar system; from our solar system or another; our galaxy or another; our space-time continuum (universe) or another; and so

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forth. Possibilities as to their composition and structure should also be listed. Then, the matter of their control should be considered, and this leads to the nature of any intelligences that might run them. Here we have to start with, on the one hand, the possibility of an all-pervading Power and continue to some form of nonintelligence, for some of them may, themselves, be lifeforms.

The range of possibility in all these respects, although, by logic, limitless, is nevertheless amendable to considerable subdivision and may even prove to be within manageable bounds, because the variety of objects in our Universe, from electron to galaxy is limited, and thus provides no such a ready-made framework, or set of pidgeonholes, to start with.

Secondly, all reports of U F Os should be carded, and cross-indexed. This can as yet be nothing more than a bibliographical exercise, but there are a number of serious-minded individuals and groups, (of sizes and importance ranging from lone individuals to the U.S. Airforce) who have attempted this. There are literally hundreds of thousands of such reports varying from paltry, unsubstantiated gossip to really terrifying incidents, resulting in the disappearance or deaths of numbers of people, as, for example, military aircraft that have been seen to enter a cloud and never come out of it, which is both costly and alarming in time of war. Such a listing calls for a very careful recording of all pertinent data and a great mass of corollary facts that may not at the time appear to have anything to do with the incident. When this has been done, all kinds of UFOs—both those that can be explained as known phenomena, and those that cannot be so explained—ought to have pigeon-holes ready for their reception.

Thirdly, whatever can be done about catching, keeping, measuring, and weighing these things, should be done. In this field the general public can help, not only by making reports but also—like the gentleman in northern Ireland recently—by trying to capture a UFO and delivering it to some competent authority, despite ridicule and publicity. The press can help by censoring the facetious and giving the public the news on these matters, straight. Science can help by admitting that the phenomena are outside their particular provinces, but by encouraging the establishment of a new discipline to deal with them. Officialdom could bring the whole matter much closer to solution, or at least some understanding, by not

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only making thorough investigations but by publishing all the facts about those cases which they cannot explain and simply filing the facts on those that they can. The Law could—but certainly will never be empowered to—further the whole business by prosecuting anybody who, under the guise of *expert* knowledge (which, of course, nobody has at present), tries to *explain away* anything that cannot be explained by them.

UFOs are, at present, an unpleasantness of an advanced order. Whether they exist or do not exist, they are almost constantly in the news, have cost us millions of dollars annually for some years, and get a lot of people unduly excited, thereby adding to the already excessive overload of tensions in this uncertain new world. They appear on occassion even to have caused death. Like television, the beastly things appear to be here to stay, and it is high time that some serious minds were brought to bear upon them and the problem they are creating. This may call for an unexpected extension of psychology, or of astronomy or meteorology. It might do the same for biology because some might well be highly tenuous life-forms, indigenous to our upper atmosphere. It might prove to be nothing more than an exercise in bibliographical research, but needs, first of all, to be tackled *scientifically*.

What we need, in fact, is the immediate establishment of a respectable new science named Ufology.

YOU COULD NOT HIDE....

I remember Zimbabwe. I remember the crack of the whips as the overseers—their bodies glistening with the same rank sweat as ours—cursed us and struck at us with whips that were as leaden as the foul air we breathed and struggled in. There was an urgency—an almost feverish urgency—in the way they cursed at our slowness, cursed at our clumsiness, cursed at those who collapsed and died, their bodies sagging in the dirt encrusted chains.

We slaves could afford to laugh in the midst of death, because we knew that even if we died, as die we undoubtedly would, these men with their blood-shot and haunted eyes would have cursed us and struck at us in vain.

No stone towers would be protection from the gleaming things in the sky. Nothing would protect these men and their masters, we whispered to each other around the fires in the evenings. You could not hide from these eyes of the Gods...

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the cat and the canaries

by . . . *HELEN M. URBAN*

The Castorian envoy paid more attention to the soft little grey creature than to the assembled ambassadors.

The castorian envoy had picked up a kitten from somewhere. It clung to his neck, twisting and curling against his head and ears, and the Castorian seemed inordinately delighted with its antics; paid more attention to the soft little grey creature than to the whole assembly of national representatives that had gathered to greet this envoy from the first starship to epenly land on Earth.

Shurlal, for that was his name, had waited with obtrusive calm for the soldiers to clear a path through the jam of people around the ship, then he had stepped unhesitatingly into the car full of brass.

The army had had one devil of a fit about the landing spot. Too near to Hoover Dam for Western continental peace of mind; too near this; too near that. Way out in the middle of nowhere, but too near to something or other for comfort.

The trip into Vegas had been most difficult for the army men. Shurlal had been fiendishly r e l a x e d; had scanned the passing scenery

The welcoming committee had been impressed by the magnificent proportions of the Castorian envoy, but his offhandedness had alienated some of the stiffer necks. He seemed to be taking the whole occasion too lightly. He should have been aware of what the meeting could mean.

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and made no maliciously comparative comments about the arid wastes; seemed in fact to be much more interested in scrooching around in the seat to find the most comfortable spot.

The welcoming committee at the hotel had been impressed by the magnificent proportions of Shurlal, but his offhandedness had alienated some of the stiffer necks among the diplomatic representatives. They felt that he was taking the historical importance of this occasion much too lightly, though the French representative allowed that interstellar cultural interchange might have conditioned Shurlal to feel less ceremonious than they on this unique occasion.

The representative of Italy graciously conceded the Frenchman his point of view, but dissented for himself to this degree. That interstellar interchange ought to have made Shurlal *more* aware of the awesomeness of first contact.

Adherents to either point of view might quickly have formed themselves behind the points' proponents, but Shurlal put an end to the dispute by turning his back on the welcoming committee to ask a General where he might freshen up a bit.

Dinner; speeches; wines; speeches; and then Shurlal was asked to present his world's greetings to Earth.

Shurlal reached up to pet the kitten that clung to his neck, then rose to speak:

"Beautiful, gentle little thing," he remarked, and the national representatives stirred restlessly, not much in the mood to hear the cat's qualities rhapsodized.

Shurlal continued: "Of course this is all very ineffectual, for I am not reaching the proper ones at this time."

"Oh, oh!" the South African sneered. "One of those 'common man' radicals."

Shurlal frowned delicately and said, scratching the kitten behind the ears, "It's a shame this exquisite little darling can't speak."

The British M.P. choked violently. He had been on the committee to suppress fantasy and Shurlal's words came near to injecting a note of definite fantasy into the proceedings.

Shurlal twitched his lips with pleasure as the kitten purred into his ears. He petted her lovingly, then spoke to the world's representatives. Despite his heavily rolling accent, his words were clearly understood:

"You must realize that you'll all have to leave this world."

The assembly exploded. The roar of their shouted protests reverberated in the banquet room until order was restored by a trumpeter from the orchestra.

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A senator from one of the large eastern seaboard states came out the winner. Holding the floor, he roared, "Go?" He shook his fist. "Go where?"

"That matters little to us, but you're undoubtedly clever; you'll make it."

The Canadian took the floor, demanding, "Do you mean to imply that you're taking over here?"

"Absolutely." He again turned his attention to the kitten. "Dear little primitive," he crooned. "Her purr is the most delightful thing; such nuances of delight; such delicate shades of tone."

The protests erupted again and once again the trumpeter knocked them down with brass-throated blasts.

Shurlal spoke: "A more suitably representative meeting must be arranged. And it is imperative that you leave, for you people are such a noisy lot, and we will need comfort and quiet." He looked around, distracted by the din; had to raise his voice to be heard. "Why, it's so noisy in here, I can't even hear myself purr."

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the temporal paradox

by...E. HENLEY

Ward shuddered inwardly. He had seen a toad smile like that when swallowing a fly. It was not congenial.

STEPHEN WARD, tough stocky ex-paratrooper, looked across the desk at the man he knew simply as Peter, and decided that he did not like him; not that that mattered, for he was just one of the nameless chain through which he received his orders and his money. Ward was not really interested in the Peoples Republic, or whoever's republic he was supposed to be working for, but it offered what he wanted,—action, adventure, and money.

Peter's bland face regarded him without expression as he pushed a newspaper photograph towards him.

"Do you know him?"

"Who wouldn't?—Professor Humphrey Griggs, a dead cert for a knighthood."—or so it had seemed until a few days before. His was the name coupled with the advance of British nuclear development, at Woomera, Montebello, and Kilaulau; then had come the final terrifying explosion in the Antarctic, ten times more powerful than it should have been, and Griggs' rift with the Government team.

The apparent lack of security might mean that he carried much in his head. And it mightn't.... A personal approach would obviously be necessary—if the unpredictable Professor Griggs was to be successfully persuaded... But the problem of reaching Professor Griggs proves decidedly more complicated than they expected. Unpleasantly so.

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Griggs, the insufferable, had been too right, and had predicted correctly, with the equations the others had dismissed as mathematical gibberish.

Peter passed a cutting across the desk. It announced that for 'purely personal reasons' Griggs was leaving the Government team to engage in private research.

Ward raised his eyebrow. "Our people are more interested than H.M. Government?"

Peter nodded. "—than H. M. Government seem to be," he said. "He is being installed near Imperial College. No watch appears to be kept on the building, and we can't find who's backing him. Perhaps they don't want to attract attention,"—his lips curled slightly. "We think that he may be seriously pursuing his idea that time scales may, locally be shortened."

"And would that be important?"

"Possibly. He predicted that a local shortening in large thermonuclear explosions would slow down dispersal and increase the explosions would slow down dispersal and increase the explosive energy. Certainly something happened in the last explosion.—Yes, may be quite important." He nodded. "The apparent lack of security may mean that he carries much in his head. A personal approach may be necessary." He smiled, and Ward shuddered inwardly. He had seen a toad smile like that when swallowing a fly. It was not congenial.

He leaned forward intently as Peter went on to brief him.

A CAREFUL worker, he knew that the job of casing the Griggs establishment could not be hurried. It was three o'clock in the morning when almost a month later, letting himself in through Griggs' front door, he started slowly and quietly to inspect the house. Firstly the basement, where, as he had expected was most of the heavy equipment, generators and control panels. He noted the position where several heavy insulated cables went through the ceiling.

He found the room above open, but it appeared to be merely a general workshop, and he noted that the main cables passed up the wall to the floor above.

Moving stealthily, he returned to the stairs. He paused at the top as a soft sound caught his ears,—uncanny in that silent house to hear someone laughing softly. He noticed a dim light coming from a doorway at the back of the house. Creeping forward and peering in, he could see Griggs' young wife lying half raised on her elbow, murmuring to her baby in the cot beside the bed.

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The place beside her was empty, and Ward moved swiftly on thinking hard: Griggs must be awake somewhere, and he didn't think he was in the bedroom.

Pausing outside what he guessed to be the main laboratory, he gently tried the door, biting back his annoyance as the hinges squeaked alarmingly in the silence.

This was infuriating; at least one person was awake nearby, but there could be no turning back. Suddenly help came from two directions,—the baby let out a lusty cry, and from the end of the passage came the sound of running water. He stepped quickly into the room and closed the door behind him. He paused and listened. Heavy footsteps approached, passed the door, and receded into the bedroom, and there followed a murmuring of conversation.

Flashing a light over the mass of apparatus in the room, he saw that his surmise had been correct. Banks of valves caught the light of his torch, and the whole complex array cast bizarre shadows on the walls. In front of the one unobscured window in the left hand corner stood a paper-littered desk, while over the door behind him a band of coloured cables led to a console of dials, switches and cathode ray tubes in the other corner. The main structures seemed to be a pair of complicated walls of insulated copper strips, which obscured the rest of the far wall. To these, conducting rods fanned out from terminals atop a tall black cylinder to his right.

Quailing inwardly at the complexity, he moved forward to examine the contents of the desk, starting slightly at his reflection in a mirror. He noticed that the inner surfaces of the two walls were made up of concentric sets of silvery annular plates.

He was bending over to examine a circuit diagram on the desk, when something made him hold his breath and strain his ears in the darkness. Someone was approaching very softly down the corridor.

Extinguishing his torch, Ward crept into the narrow space between the metal walls, and waited in the darkness.

The door opened and a light was turned on. In the mirror Ward could see the console and the edge of the doorway, and glimpsed the sleeve of a paisley dressing gown. He held his breath, his hand ready to draw his gun.

After a pause the figure moved towards the console, and he found himself in the mirror face to face with Griggs. The rugged face regarded him abstractedly for a moment, a slight smile curling his lips.

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"How convenient," he murmured, "A volunteer guinea-pig."

His left hand moved over the switches and buttons on the console, and lights came on in quick succession as generators and convertors whirred into life.

"Don't move," he said, "unless you want to fry," and crossed to the desk.

Ward was aware of tingling sensation in his flesh, which increased until the slightest movement sent pins and needles over him in hot prickling waves. He reached for his gun, but released it as it burned into his palm. He realised that the edges of the copper elements were glowing with a faint hissing light, and sweat broke out on his face.

Griggs turned to face him.

"I am surprised not to have been visited before," he said, and paused to glance at a waveform which appeared on one cathode ray tube.

"I have very keen hearing, you know," he added, "and that door is very squeaky. Now, you're going to help me."

"And why should I want to"

"You have little option.—You'll burn if you try to get out," he warned as Ward moved forward. "Look," and a ball of crumpled paper, which he tossed between the walls, disappeared in a sheet of flame.

He started speaking rapidly.

"Now listen carefully, for you've little time." He glanced up as a red light came on, and he moved back to the console another waveform appeared on the second C.R.T.

"I assume you know my theory, otherwise you wouldn't be here. Between those two walls I have largely proved it by altering the speeds of many physical and chemical reactions; but then I tried with animals, white mice—" he paused, and rotating dial knobs watched the waveforms intently.—"They always disappear; and *you* are going to find out where they went," he added.

Ward started blustering, but a glance from Griggs silenced him; he realised that to him he was merely another laboratory animal, in an ultra-scientific rat-trap.

Griggs was talking very quickly.

"Have you a watch?—Good. Wherever you find yourself in a few moments time, be there again in exactly one day. Then if my theory's right you should get back."

"Where—" Ward started, but the waveforms were matched, and Griggs jabbed at a button.

For an instant the prickling sensation in his flesh exploded over him like fire, —then there was darkness,

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with only the memory of Griggs' eyes in the mirror. There was silence and utter darkness. In a panic he pressed the button of his torch; he could see nothing although there was movement all round him; but the beam from his torch went drifting and eddying off into the darkness; it made him feel sick, he switched off quickly. He had a fearful sensation of sinking, of immense turning movement, of vast things, quiet things, going on all round him, with a sighing and a murmuring, slowly receding like a calm sea ebbing under mist; suffocation,—and release.

He felt weak and shaken, but was still alive. He mopped the sweat from his face and looked about. The walls were still there, and a little light filtered under the door in a wall which now enclosed them. He heard slight movements from the other side, which stopped as he stepped forward to try the handle. Finding it locked, he knocked on the door, and footsteps approached.

"Is someone in there?" a girl's voice asked.

"Yes," he called, "Will you let me out please?"

After a brief pause the footsteps retreated, to return a few moments later. A key rattled in he lock, the door opened, and he found himself looking at a pleasant but puzzled young woman. She was attractive, with rosy cheeks, and fair hair trained back in a neat bun,—about twenty-three or four he thought; but on this sweet face was an expression of curiously cynical resignation. The room, he saw, had been extended, and was full of bookshelves.

He felt both bewildered and relieved, but was puzzled that she asked no question. After looking at him apprehensively for a moment, she returned uncertainly to her librarian's desk by the window.

He followed, himself at a loss, and stood for a while gazing down into the street, which looked the same, though he sensed a change. It was day.

Several young people came and left, changing books, which the girl stamped and put aside. Apart from an occasional glance they seemed to take little notice of him, though they appeared subdued, and one or two looked frightened.

Glancing over her shoulder, he noticed the date—August 2nd, 1986.

When they were alone again, she turned towards him.

"What is it?" she said with an effort. "What is the matter?" She had paled considerably.

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Putting his hand on her shoulder, he regarded her steadily.

"You don't have to be afraid of me," he said gently.

She relaxed a little as she looked at him.

"Aren't you a Peep?" she asked.

"A Peep?—"

She was puzzled.

"A P.P.—Peoples' Police. What were you doing in there?" she added as he shook his head.

Remembering Griggs, he smiled slightly.

"Looking for mice," he said. "Have you seen any?"

"Mice!" she exclaimed. "We keep getting the wretched things. I can't think where they come from, being white mice."

She looked at him quizzically.

"What *are* you?" she demanded.

"I'm Stephen Ward. A hunter after white mice and pretty librarians."

She laughed and blushed, and as one o'clock chimed outside, started gathering her things.

"Are you off now?" he asked.

"Yes. Till Tuesday thank goodness, as Monday is a holiday."

"Let's eat outside somewhere, where we can talk," he suggested.

"All right," she said after a pause. "I feel I can trust you, though goodness knows why. No one seems to trust anyone any more," she added softly.

"My name is Mary, by the way, Mary Williams," she behind them, and together said as she locked the door they walked along the familiar-unfamiliar corridor, down the stairs to the street.

The building was now some kind of Technical School. Students were drifting out of the front door, and their quietness struck him. He realized what had impressed him before,—the quietness of the streets; only once had he heard the sound of traffic.

"Your students seem a quiet lot," he remarked.

She looked at him quickly.

"Most of them are going to see the Queen," she said. It seemed an odd reply to his remark.

"When? Now?"

"This afternoon."

"Are you going?"

"I wasn't, but we can if you like."

A strange feeling of curiosity made him say that he would.

Buying food and coffee in cartons at a delicatessen, they made their way along the crowded streets to St. James Park.

The fearful London traffic was gone, and the only vehicles to be seen were mail vans or patrolling police cars. He noticed the number of police.

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A few were ordinary bobbies, but more were of a new kind, in blue battle dress and armed, patrolling in pairs or standing at street corners and watching the strangely subdued crowd. Once they went into action, blowing whistles and running along with batons extended, herding the people onto the pavements as a distant siren's wail and roar of motorbike engines rapidly approached. Three large black Rolls Royces with darkened windows and a police escort sped past.

"His Excellency the Administrator," Mary said sullenly, "On his way to the Palace."

THEY ate their lunch under a tree, overlooking the water, throwing scraps to the ducks which came swimming hopefully towards them. Ward leaned back against the trunk, and gazing up through the leaves tried to collect his thoughts. He was aware of Mary sitting expectantly beside him, and grasped her hand as a sudden panic sense of unreality swept over him.

Here were the same lake, the same ducks and sky; the buildings too were little changed; but the great city was uncannily different, hushed, cowed, frightened, and deeply unhappy.

Mary's fingers squeezed his as she regarded him in perplexity.

"Mary," he said, "I swear that what I am going to tell you is true, though how any sane person could believe it I don't know." He paused. "Do you know what that erection is in the cupboard where you found me?"

Mary's perfectly matter-of fact answer took him aback.

"They call it 'Griggs' Time Machine', and it's said he succeeded in speeding up time and made things disappear in it: but I expect it is just a fable. Periodically someone comes and tries to fathom it."

"You amaze me. This makes things easier, but what happened to Griggs?"

"When the Party took over, he was one of the first to be taken. They said one of their agents had disappeared in his house, and tried him for murder. My father was a reporter on the case. At the trial Griggs said the fellow vanished in his machine. It obviously wasn't what was expected, as they stopped the case. At a re-trial a few months later he confessed to shooting him. He was sentenced, but no one ever heard what happened to him."

Ward closed his eyes, and a cold sick fear contracted his stomach. Here he was in the future, in a Utopia he had helped to create, and from what Mary said it seemed that retrograde time-travel was

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impossible. He was trapped in his own future.

"Stephen, what is the matter? You look quite ill."

She regarded him anxiously. He squeezed her hand and struggled to control his feelings.

"No. I'm all right, thanks. What you say makes things easier to explain. Who did they say Griggs murdered?"

"I never heard his name, but how does this help?"

He looked at her intently.

"That man's name was Stephen Ward. I was that man."

He told his story briefly, as Mary listened bewildered, but without the utter disbelief such a tale would have elicited in his own time.

"But—?" She asked many questions. He told her he couldn't explain how it had happened, but gradually all the small details, and his own sincerity convinced her; the obsolete notes which had aroused interest at the delicatessen; a thirty-year old letter, its paper fresh and crisp; a good American pen, definitely a thing of the past; and the slightly odd clothes.

She remarked that it was fortunate that men's clothes had altered little since the Party had taken over; but even as she became convinced a cloud seemed to settle over her.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"It means you worked for Them, and helped Them to get in," she said glumly, and after a moment stood up. "Let's go to the Palace, if you want to."

They gathered their rubbish, dropped it into a waste basket, and walked mournfully away.

"What is happening at the Palace?" he asked. "—So they didn't do away with the monarchy."

"No." she said dully. "They took away the Prince of Wales for 'suitable education'; the others, poor things, are being maintained partly as a sop to the people, partly as hostages for good national behavior. That's what my father said. The Prince is coming back today to take over and the poor old Queen is abdicating in his favour, 'for reasons of health'. I can only imagine how she feels," she added unhappily.

The nightmarish feeling persisted and grew, as they joined the great sullen crowd before the Palace. How often had he seen this scene before, and now how horribly different it was. He felt the desperation of the people, clinging and reaching out to one thing they loved, which was left to them.

Above the Palace, side by side, two great flags lifted and curled in the breeze, the Royal Standard and the Red Ensign.

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He asked Mary why the Red Ensign should be there, and she answered bitterly: "Look a little closer. That is the flag of the new England."

He looked again, and saw, emblazoned on the red, the familiar emblem of the hammer and sickle. Just then a murmur passed over the crowd, as a figure came out onto the balcony; familiar, so familiar, and yet so changed, aged, a little stooping, a figure of great sadness. But what chilled his heart was the weirdness of her welcome: no joyous cheers now, no tumultuous ovation, but something horrifying and uncanny, a thing that pressed itself like a cold hand onto his mind. He would not forget it, that great crowd raising both hands, and waving them towards her, slowly from side to side, and uttering a vast sigh, a moan, a groan, a monumental whispered 'No'.

"No-o-o. No-o-o-o."

No.

He would see no more. Grabbing Mary by the arm, he hustled her through the crowd. She looked with amazement at the fury on his face. Horror there still was, but hot anger had drowned it, and there burned all the furious resentment of an Englishman against *THEM*, who had done this damned thing to his country, demanding action. As they cleared the crowd he glanced at Mary, and saw that she had been weeping; he squeezed her arm, and for some time they walked together in silence, Mary with her head bowed, he with wild thoughts racing through his mind. Eventually they reached Green Park, and sat down on the grass, under a tree.

"Mary," he said vehemently. "This thing must not be. If I can I must go back, and do all I can to prevent this vile thing. And if I can't I'll fight the nightmare here."

"Be careful, Stephen. Someone may be listening."

She looked around fearfully, but no one was there under the green trees.

"How *CAN* you go back, Stephen? And if you do, how can you change the past?"

"According to Griggs, I have to be back where you found me— after twenty four hours, if I am to return, or so he said; don't ask me how, but I must try. He sent me to find where his wretched mice had gone."

He was silent for a few moments.

"If I do get back, all this for me will be in the future, and none of it will have happened."

"And will I not have happened, either?" said Mary wistfully. "If you go back, will I just cease to be? Even

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that would be better, if all his could be changed."

She looked very weary, and suddenly he felt he could not bear to leave her, a sweet, real living person, in this dismal future world, never to have lived at all. He put his arm around her shoulders, and drew her gently toward him; she leaned passively against him, and he felt her body shaking with sobs.

"Mary. Mary. Come back with me," he said gently, feeling a tenderness which he, in his tough life, had felt for no girl before.

She put her arm across him, and pressed her cheek to his chest. Then he tilted her head back, and kissed her.

"Will you come?" he asked.

"If I can, I will."

"Can we get into the building on a Sunday?"

"I expect I could. There is a caretaker, and I could tell him I had to work, but I don't think he'd let you in."

Stephen smiled slightly; he thought persuasion might be possible, but didn't want to risk any hitch.

"The School will be open until nine o'clock tonight for evening classes," Mary told him. "There will be no one upstairs, so we could slip in and lock ourselves in the library."

"Fine. Then we'll do that. But until then what?"

He stared dully at the grass, and for a time both of them were silent.

"This may be goodbye for us," Mary said quietly. "If it is, I should like to walk through Hyde Park, and have supper at a little place not far from the School, where we can sit as long as we like. It is something I often did with my father."

Later that evening they walked up the steps and into the school. They could hear sounds from some of the rooms, but no one seemed to notice them go upstairs to the library where Mary unlocked the door.

"Have you the other key?" asked Stephen.

She handed it to him, and as she locked the library, he crossed the room, and opened the door where lay his only hope of returning to the past. He turned as Mary came to him. She leaned against him as he put his arms round her, and they embraced each other for a long sweet moment. She sighed.

"Nearly seventeen hours to wait, Stephen. And we don't know what will happen even then."

"I know, my dear, I know. Waiting is the worst part of anything. I found that in the war; waiting to jump was always worse than jumping." He squeezed her shoulder gently. "Mary. What about

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your people? Won't anyone be wondering where you are?"

"There is no one, Stephen. My mother died five years ago; and my father," she paused, "they took him away just before that; something he said or wrote, I suppose. I can only hope they are together," she added softly. "Now I live in a room not far from here. No one will be looking for me. Anyway, if I do come with you, will there be anyone to look?"

That was the question. If they went back, did all this just cease to be? If the course of events were different, as it must be if he returned, would this thirty years be wiped out like chalk from a slate? And Mary's mother and father, in the flowering of their love would they again conceive her, and would there then be two Marys at the same time? Or was this present world merely one of many possibles, which branched out from one another from moment to moment throughout time? Stephen gave up pondering the imponderable.

Just then they both started, as they heard footsteps approaching from down the corridor. With an odd feeling that events were repeating themselves, he gripped Mary by the arm, and pushing her gently in front of him closed and locked the door behind them. They held their breath as they heard someone trying then knocking on the Library door.

Suddenly, in the stuffy darkness between the walls, a slight cool draught seemed to stir the air, and a faint tingling sensation played over Ward's skin.

"Mary!" He caught hold of her and held her close. "Mary!" His voice was urgent.

"Quiet! Stephen! They'll hear you."

The knocking started again, and someone was shouting.

"Don't you feel anything, Mary? A draught, a tingling?"

"Yes, yes. I do. Is that it?" she gasped. "Is something happening?"

He held her tightly, urgently, as the floor seemed to move under their feet, like the deck of a ship, to lose its substance and drop away—.

An unearthly roaring filled their ears; the wind grew and buffeted them from all sides. For what seemed an eternity all feeling of motion died away, and there was nothing but sensation of themselves. Then, almost it seemed without transition, they were back, in the laboratory; day was breaking, and the sound of the early traffic broke like music on his ears. In the passage a buzzer was sounding, while a red light blinked on a panel of the console. Mary

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opened her eyes and looked up at him. Pale and exhausted, she looked dazedly about.

"We're back, and you're still with me," he said ineffably thankful.

She nodded, leaning against him.

Footsteps hurried down the corridor.

Struck by a fearful possibility, he propelled Mary out into the room, throwing his handkerchief ahead of them.

"We might be whirled back again if we stay in there."

The door opened and Griggs hurried in, glancing at them in some surprise. Looking at the winking light and instruments on the console, he threw several switches in quick succession, and as generators and convertors whined into silence, turned toward them again, puzzled by Mary's presence.

"You were lucky to get back," he said to Ward. "A circuit breaker just cut out, —there is a fault somewhere." He regarded Mary again. "If this young lady came with you, there is a flaw in my theory,—an anomaly—shouldn't be possible."

For some moments he stared out of the window, murmuring to himself, then turning to them, invited them to have coffee with him in the kitchen, and led the way downstairs. He seemed to have forgotten that Ward was an intruder.

As they passed the bedroom, he called out in answer to his wife's querying voice.

"Everything's fine. We have guests, my dear,"—a little laugh—"but there's a flaw in my theory, something very wrong somewhere—"

He was muttering to himself all the way downstairs.

Ward thought he must be difficult to live with, but a protesting cry from junior made him think, "He's a man for a' that."

Smiling he looked at Mary, who smiled back and squeezed his hand.

Ward has given much valuable assistance to M15. And Mary? She is happy, but a little puzzled. Learned men have called her children the 'Griggsian Trans-temporal Paradoxes,' though to her they are the most natural thing in the world.

Only one thing worries her, and that not very much: all three were born before she was.

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the tipplers

by...MORRIS HERSHMAN

Pity the poor temperance lecturer who found himself on extremely cold Icarus...

SOME men are born great in the words (more or less) of the late William Shakespeare, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Mr Jeremiah Hawkins had greatness thrust upon him, and in a very odd way, indeed.

He couldn't guess that, of course, the afternoon he was so justifiably tense.

"This is it," he said to his mirror. "Today or never."

Mr. Hawkins bundled himself up and stepped out to a street in the planet Icarus.

Though he had arrived here a few days ago, one effect of the hellish climate still astonished him. In this crisp cruel air the natives had to imbibe strong drinks to keep from freezing; everyone drank strong liquor to survive. Mr Jeremiah Hawkins had been particularly astonished and galled by this because he was a temperance lecturer by profession.

Picture him on a day that would be wintry on Earth but was rated summery here on Icarus, and passing the great public square, marked by a fountain in which scotch and rye sprayed into a pond from out of the statue of a goddess, from her nostrils,

Morris Hershman makes a first appearance in these pages with this sympathetic story of Jeremiah Hawkins, stuck on the planet Icarus, who faced a serious problem— What to do on this tippling planet!

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mouth and other apertures Every few feet along this square a public liquor stand had been placed. In front of the nearest one a group of angry small children were lined up and waiting their turns.

Mr Hawkins averted his eyes.

The worst was yet to come. A few feet further down the square, he passed a mother trying to feed her infant out of a nursing bottle.

"Be a good child and take your gin," the mother crooned.

Mr Hawkins' mouth opened in sheer horror. "Are you feeding gin to an *infant?*"

"It's healthy, isn't it?" the mother shot back. "Better for the child than any of those blended whiskies."

It was the question of health, in fact, on which none of the Icarians could see eye to eye with Mr Hawkins. At his first temperance rally a few hours later, an Icarian in the crowd got to his webbed feet and said:

"I've been drinking my pint of cognac every day since I was five years old, and I'll match my health against yours."

To a roll of applause the Icarian came onto the stage. He was about average, seven feet two inches tall and with four clear, not bloodshot, eyes. He showed that he could lift weights, run a dozen laps around the stage without getting tired, and touch his toes without bending his knees.

Mr. Hawkins of course, was short, but his hands shook with nervousness and his eyes had been made bloodshot by insomnia. As for his attempts to run around the stage, they had better not be described.

Mr Hawkins, in fact, was laughed off the stage entirely; and though this one audience had paid to get in, as soon as the word spread, there'd be no attendance at all.

"Sunk," Mr Hawkins groaned the next morning, sitting up in bed with a thermos cup of milk in one hand; he had brought supplies from earth. "We're in trouble, let's face it."

"Yep," his manager agreed. "Maybe you could lecture in *favor* of liquor."

"In favor of something?" Mr Hawkins hesitated. "Nobody does that. I'm not sure but I think its unethical."

The manager shook his head in dismay. "Well, we put all our savings into this jaunt. We haven't even got enough money left to make the Earth ship and get back home."

Mr Hawkins was about to agree, but he was interrupted by a knock on the door. The mournfully Icarian who entered had booked Mr. Hawkins on a lecture tour of thirty-one cities.

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"The rest of the tour is being cancelled," he said mournfully. "None of my contracts will go on with it ...Say," he added, his four eyes gleaming, "what's that in your hand?"

"An Earth beverage," Mr Hawkins said listlessly.

"Can I try it?"

Mr. Hawkins may have welcomed the chance to make a convert, but milk is expensive. Reluctantly, he poured some into a thermos cup and handed it over.

The Icarian tasted it, wiped his lips and shook his head. "Very unpleasant," was the verdict. "A gritty, harsh taste."

"What, *milk?*"

"Very bland, too," the Icarian said. "It gives a weakening, dizzying sensation of well-being."

A strange light came into Mr Hawkins' eyes.

"The air," he whispered to himself. "If such cold dry air makes hard liquor necessary ...Tell me, are you willing to take a chance?"

In a few weeks the first shipments of soft drinks were seen on Icarus. A soft drink store was opened on the Main Street of the capital; and its success caused others to open, as well. In no time at all, soft drink stores had sprung up all around the planet.

And in a few months Mr. Hawkins was lecturing before packed houses.

"Soft drinks!" he would boom, letting the words out like profanity. "Haven't we seen perfectly respectable men rolling on the streets of our communities? Haven't we seen them, weak and blue with cold, crawling into hovels with milk bottles clutched in their hands?"

The audience, which certainly had, always agreed.

Nowadays, with money coming in almost as fast as it can be counted, and his being hailed as a great man who has come down from Earth to help counteract the evil; and as founder of the organization known as Soft Drinks, Anonymous; the composer of a song, "Lips that touch soft drinks shall never touch mine"; and author of an original long run play, "Ten Nights In A Soda Fountain," Mr Hawkins cannot leave Icarus and go back to Earth, even if he wants to.

The prime incentive to staying, however, is that his researches have convinced him that Icarians have never heard of gambling.

Civilian Saucer Intelligence, whose first column on UFO reports and sightings appears next month, is one of the research groups described in Ivan Sanderson's article. The group maintains an extensive file of material on UFOs and has a program of meetings and public lectures for the immediate future...

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success story

by... RICHARD WILSON

No, the innocence act was no good. She would try the forgiveness angle. She would....

DR. LINDEN MARGATE, at thirty-eight, had not achieved the heights of fame he'd aspired to when he was attending medical school and so when the Planets Trust offered him the post at Venus Hospital he accepted eagerly, but without first consulting his wife.

Within two hours of the time he received the offer he had arranged with a fellow GP to take over his small midtown practice and packed the few things he wanted to take with him from his office.

There was a brief, intense quarrel with Gloria which changed the flushed excitement he had carried home with him to pale anger. She told him he was thoughtless and cruel and said she hated him and he said she was a selfish child—she was twenty-four—who was standing in the path of his progress. Then, when the heat of argument had passed, he spoke of the opportunities inherent in being the first resident doctor on Venus and of the five-figure contract and ex-

Richard Wilson, author of the delightful THE GIRLS FROM PLANET FIVE (Ballantine Books—35 cents) returns to these pages with his gentle story of Dr. Linden Margate and his wife, Gloria Margate, a very attractive young woman. The author suggested this be called 88 BEATS 266—which is quite true—but we think you'll agree SUCCESS STORY is justified. Life can be beautiful, obviously, on glorious Venus.

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tra space pay and of how he would send for her within a year and how she would be the first woman on Venus.

She smiled then and made them both a drink and agreed that she had been unreasonable. This was his big chance of course, and she musn't interfere with his career. She understood that now, she told him, and she told herself how fine it would be to be the First Lady of Venus. She thought of it that way, in capital letters, and she thought also that this would be the path to riches and position which they had almost despaired of finding.

She kissed him soundly and a week later she stood behind the insulated observation dome at the 'port as a slender silver needle with her husband inside fought its way through the atmosphere and out into space.

She stayed there watching until the fiery wake of the ship was lost in the starry sky, and then went home and tried not to sulk.

THE YEAR passed very quickly.

Gloria Margate was an attractive young woman. She was blonde and tiny and pert. Her allotment check from the Trust arrived promptly on the last day of each month and it was generous enough to permit her to complement her trim figure with an assortment of new costumes and matching accessories.

Her sulks had not lasted long. The Margates had many friends, and they had friends who had friends, and a large number of these friends were men. At first they were "safe" men, of conscience and principle, who would not dream of making a pass at this temporary widow who was so bravely bearing up under her husband's pioneering.

These escorts were succeeded by others who dreamed quite intensively of making passes and by still others who were not dreamers but men of action.

And so the months went by in a flurry of non-loneliness and sulkless evenings.

On one such evening a young man was interrupted in her flat in the act of pouring cocktails for them by the buzzing of the messagephone. He volunteered to switch it on but his good breeding was such that he did not read the message until her widened eyes beckoned him to do so.

It bore a Venus dateline and said everything had gone as planned and that the Margate apartment on the hospital grounds was ready and aching for her. There were details of the passage which had been booked for her on the next ship. The message was signed "LOVE LIND", and to Gloria it appeared to be in the imperative.

And so she was defiant

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about it when the young man suggested tactfully that the cocktail should be his nightcap.

She said there was no reason why their evening should be spoiled. It wasn't as if Lind were around the corner in, say, Africa, she said.

The young man thought privately that this was perhaps a crass way of putting it. But he thought more urgently that she was quite a gorgeous woman. And so he said lightly that the cocktails had got a bit warm and should be disposed of quickly while he made an icier batch.

They drank swiftly.

GLORIA MARGATE boarded the spaceship with a rather bad conscience. But the hurtling, week long voyage through the emptiness soon washed it to a light gray.

And so she was able to respond with genuine warmth when her husband kissed her passionately in the customs shed.

It was a dream of an apartment, air-conditioned throughout against the sultry mist of the Venus atmosphere but with thick non-openable windows that gave a romantic view of the lush grounds and the thin clouds scudding along incessantly at shoulder-level.

Linden Margate, M. D., had become a very important person on Venus. As Gloria, relaxing in an armchair, listened to him tell about it, it appeared that he occupied a place close to the top of Tier Two among VIPs. Tier One, of course, was unattainable, at present, for anyone not a member of the diplomatic corps. The diplomats just now were doing little more than the work of consuls. They kept their eyes on the doings of the Planets Trust, to see that it stayed within the bounds of its contract. But every so often they brushed up on their protocol and studied their instruction manuals in preparation for the day when human life might be found on the planet, or some suitably responsive intelligence.

Thus far not even an animal had been found, although there was a rumor among the botanists that the plant life would bear watching.

Lind had not been bashful about filling her in about his role on Venus in the past year. Gloria thought, in the first hours, that he perhaps had exaggerated his own importance, but that night at a reception in her honor at Planet House, she found that he had been modest indeed.

The Ambassador, a tall, erect widower, glowed for a moment in her exclusive presence at his side and told her that Dr. Margate was a first-rate gem of a man whose treatment of the Ambassador's high blood pressure had

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been classical, downright classical, madam.

The Resident Director of the Planets Trust, grizzled and fatherly, shook his head in wonder at the emergency surgery Lind had performed on a workman mangled in the explosion of an ore-sample ship.

The Chief Botanist had never seen a man so calm under stress as Dr. Margate had been as he freed a researcher from the grip of a devil bush. Beautiful, nasty things they were, Mrs. Margate, which should only be admired in a laboratory from behind a screen. Gloria accepted an invitation to visit the lab.

The Medical Director saluted her beauty in scarce champagne, broken out in her honor. Any woman would be an asset to Venus, he told her, but to have Venus herself grace the planet was an unbelievable privilege. Gloria managed to blush under the compliment.

And that husband of hers, she was told—a man whose devotion to his wife was almost matched by his devotion to his work. Dr. Margate's research on growth under alien conditions, of both alien and terrestrial subjects, undoubtedly would be a very imporant contribution to medical knowledge.

Lind managed tactfully to steer his wife away from his boss and introduced her to the other VIPs, in decending order of importance. Gloria delighted in the attention and Lind beamed proudly.

Then there was music. An amateur band which had been practicing for weeks struck up a waltz and Venus had its first ball. Lind was permitted the first dance, but none thereafter. The VIPs stood in line like schoolboys to take their turn at holding the planet's only woman in their arms for a few brief steps before the next one cut in to claim her.

It was quite late when the Ambassador stepped up to the bandstand. The lovely lady had had a long trip, he said, and they must not be selfish about her on this first night on Venus. They would have another party soon, certainly, now that Venus had ceased to be exclusively a man's world. Then with mock parliamentarianism, he proposed a vote of appreciation to Mrs. Margate for having made the occasion a glorious success.

There was a bantering amendment from the floor that it should be called "Gloria's success" and the assembled VIPs shouted approval.

Gloria, the success, and Lind, even more firmly entrenched among the VIPs in Tier Two, went happily home to bed.

DR. MARGATE continued to be a very busy man, but Gloria managed to be even

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busier, although in a more decorative way. She was in high demand for functions where even the slightest reason could be manufactured for her presence. She dedicated new buildings in the expanding Earth colony. She became the official hostess at diplomatic-social affairs of Venus, whose frequency had tripled since her arrival. She was driven long distances through the mist to outposts where she delivered pep talks to workers and researchers. She was chosen "Miss Morale" and was presented with a giant bouquet of flame-colored, deactivated devil flowers.

Things couldn't have been more perfect for Gloria until one day she got two pieces of news with the force of a one-two knockout punch.

The first was that other women were on their way to Venus. She tried to console herself with the hope that they might be dull, unattractive and perhaps even middle-aged, but, whatever they were, she would no longer have the exclusive feminine concession on the planet.

The other was worse. Gloria, six weeks after her arrival, realized something she would not admit even to herself up to then. She was pregnant.

She told herself she was putting on a little weight, that was all. All those receptions and dinners, she told herself, those drinks and the rich food. She had busied herself with a needle to let out her clothes. And she took to wearing widely flaring skirts. They were dreadfully out of style—but then, as the only woman, she could dictate style, not be dictated to.

At seven weeks she was definitely alarmed. Her clothes were now all but impossible to wear. She felt nauseous. She'd felt that way often in the past few weeks, but she'd put that down to the climate and perhaps hangovers. Now she knew better.

She pulled off the constricting clothing and looked at herself in a full-length mirror. There was no doubt. But the shape she was in was not normal for a woman seven weeks pregnant. Gloria looked as if she was in her fifth month.

She sagged down to the floor, put her face in her hands and cried.

Dr. Margate was icily professional about it. He gave his wife a thorough examination in their bedroom, not looking into her eyes.

Finally he pushed aside the instrument kit and stood up. He looked at her and she returned his gaze helplessly.

She might have spared him this scandal, he said.

Scandal? she said. Was it a scandal to be a father?

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He laughed mirthlessly. The fetus, he said, was late in its fifth month. There was a heartbeat. Was it true that five months ago they were on different planets?

She said nothing to that.

What would the Medical Director say? How would the Ambassador feel? How much longer did she think he would have his job if this became known?

She didn't know the answer to any of these questions. She moaned a little, not from pain.

He went on talking, for an hour. As he spoke, she felt that he was less outraged by the thought of his wife having been unfaithful to him than by the discovery of the fact of what this would do to his career. She had thought she was greedy for attention and ambitious, but now it appeared that the good Dr. Lind Margate was a far bigger climber than she ever would be.

She would have to go home, he told her. Plead some excuse—the climate, anything. Back at some Earth city away from their friends she would have the baby. He would not divorce her until it was born. Then he became even more generous and said he would permit her to divorce him. She could charge desertion, easily, with him on Venus. He looked morbidly pleased with himself for being so noble.

He went out, walking as much as possible like a man bearing up under great tragedy. He would be at the lab, he said.

When he had gone, Gloria wondered why she had been meek. Why had she let him be righteous simply because her conscience was bad? She should have denied everything, with as much righteous indignation as he had mustered.

Sure she had been a naughty girl back on Earth. But she'd been careful. Maybe her grandmother could have made a mistake about such things in her day, but now it was foolproof. There must be an explanation other than the obvious one.

Her brows contracted. She tried, vainly, to remember the date of her last sterility shot.

She remembered dimly that her hypo-needle had broken and needed replacing. That had been the day she picked up the silver-blue metallic costume from Madame Fabriza. The lab was not far from her dressmaker.

She had replaced the needle; but did she have a shot? If only her memory for dates were not so appalling!

Her best bet, she finally decided, was to deny everything, to be the innocent, to let others believe her and try to figure out an explanation.

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She was not going to go back to Earth, that was for sure. Even with other women coming to Venus, she'd be the dean of the feminine corps. And she was reasonably certain she was prettier than any of her rivals-to-be.

She felt the baby flutter inside her. She lay back comfortably and crooned, as if to the child.

Everything was going to be all right.

LIND DIDN'T COME back that day and he was gone all night. He didn't call or send a message. Gloria began to worry. Maybe he'd been sincere about wanting to send her away. This, to her practical way of thinking, was very stupid; she was a definite asset to him here on Venus, no matter what. She wondered if her strategy of innocence, which she'd had no opportunity to test since she decided on it, would work. She thought gloomily how much better it would have been if Lind were a gullible business executive, say, instead of a physician with a strong background of obstetrics.

No, the innocence act was no good. She would try the forgiveness angle. She would work on his sympathy. She built up in her mind a situation which he could accept without too much loss of pride. She had been lonely on Earth without him. She missed him terribly. But once—just once—she had listened to some dear friends who said it would be good for her to go out for an evening and had arranged a foursome.

The man had seemed to be a gentleman. They'd had a few drinks at a night club and the man had taken her home. She felt a bit woozy. Not used to liquor any more, apparently. She remembered that he had helped her up the stairs to the flat, but that was all. The cad must have taken advantage of her. It was a terrible thing to have to confess and she'd thought she'd never have to, to spare his feelings, but now it had come out.

She went over the details a few more times and decided that it would do. Lind would accept her story. His ego would be hurt, but he'd get over that. And he'd have the satisfaction of forgiving her. It was a great blessing to forgive, she'd heard. He'd feel very noble.

The door opened. Lind came in.

His clothing was wet through, as if he'd been walking through the mist without his weather suit.

He had a strange look on his face.

He came and sat beside her on the bed.

Gloria started her story, but then stopped when she saw he wasn't listening.

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He began talking, his expression dazed and his gestures vague, about rabbits and guinea pigs, chickens and bees, fruit and vegetables. It was crazy. At first.

He'd been working with them all along, he said. He should have known. He had the data in a dozen notebooks. It was all there and in his mind, too. Why hadn't he made the simple transference to human beings?

What was he talking about, she asked.

He was talking about her forgiving him, he said. For doubting her, he said. For having been cruel and horrible in her hour of trial, he said dramatically. For hurting the thing he loved most, he went on.

Gloria began to understand, dimly. She quickly dumped the story about the wooziness and the cad. She prepared to be just a bit cold, then to thaw, and finally to forgive. She would be generous.

Lind's studies in growth were the answer, of course. All the tests, all the experiments they had run pointed to the same conclusion. It was so simple, once you understood it.

Everything aged—grew—three times as fast on Venus as on Earth.

Everything from an eggplant to the Ambassador, himself. From a hen's egg to—to the baby his dear wife was carrying... Her baby—his baby. Theirs.

Human pregnancy on Venus lasted not nine months, but three. Eighty-eight days instead of 266. It was as simple as that.

What a cad he had been for doubting her. Could she ever forgive him?

She could—and finally did.

They became very happy.

AND SO WHEN Clifford G. Margate, seven pounds, nine ounces, was born three months from the date of Gloria's arrival on Venus, and after routine, impersonal blood tests had proclaimed him to be a true Margate, his father went before the Resident Board of the Planets Trust.

The board members listened skeptically, but then examined with mounting interest Lind's sheets of figures and statistics and lab reports on rates of growth and the way Venus accelerated aging processes.

Finally the Trust accepted, simultaneously, his arguments and his resignation and advanced funds to build a maternity hospital on Venus.

Under the arrangement Lind retained fifty-one per cent interest; the Trust soon found buyers for the other forty-nine per cent of the stock.

Construction of the Margate-Venus Hospital began immediately under priority

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AAA and, on Earth, the Margate Maternity Plan was launched with the biggest selective advertising campaign in recent history.

The slogan "88 beats 266" was the teaser. The appeal was to the rich women of Earth, those to whom, or to whose husbands, the cost of a round trip to Venus would not be prohibitive.

The not-quite-rich were offered All-Expenses-Paid Maternity tours.

"Why Wait 9 When 3 is Fine?" they were asked.

Having a Venus baby became the Thing to Do from Biarritz to Newport, from Palm Beach to The Riviera.

On the day Margate-Venus Hospital opened its doors it had reservations for a year in advance.

Venus boomed.

The Ambassador bestowed jointly on Dr and Mrs Linden Margate the Medal of Merit and the Margates were propelled forthwith into VIP Tier One.

The Ambassador then took the next spaceship back to Earth.

He felt he was getting along in years and even the lovely Gloria wasn't attraction enough to compensate for the fact that death was racing toward him three times as fast on Venus as back home.

THE GALACTIC GAZETEER—

GLAKKAS. Reportedly the original inhabitants of Venus. Professor Arrex, in his ORIGINS OF THE GLAKKAS, suggests that they were emigrants from another galaxy, and quotes a number of chants in High Glakka and from the Glakka mythology supporting the theory. Professor Arrex further points to reproductive similarities between the Glakkas, the Arrillians and Trans-Denebians, as further substantiation of the claims of the Glakka elders to alien origins. ... . THAAKLA. A third stage arregation of cultures, basically expansionist, with interesing possibilities. originally an Aldovanian colony, planet Thaakla (known to its inhabitants as Therra) has a history of frequently self-destroying cultures. Commander Xtilhac, author of the definitive GALACTIC SURVEY, predicts in his article on Thaakla that the inhabitants will some day, again, learn what their legends calll space travel. Professor Harrenius, who is undoubtedly the greatest living authority in the galaxy on the bipeds of Thaakla, has expressed some scepticism, and believes their basically expansionist orientation, balanced by their apparently phenomenal ignorance of even neighboring planets, will make their progress considerably slower than anticipated by Commander Xtilhac....

—translated from the Martian

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the truth is fantastic

by . . . GRAY BARKER

Who were the three strange men in dark suits who scared the saucer investigator so much? Were they aliens?

"YOU know, sometimes I think flying saucers must be the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on mankind—or that mankind has perpetrated upon itself." Dom was smiling wickedly.

I was silent.

I hadn't been saying much on the way to Newark. I usually grew morose when the time came to leave Dom's place in Jersey City. Soon I would get on a Capital Viscount and after a change in Pittsburgh be skimming over the mountain tops hoping the pilot could set us down at Clarksburg, W. Va., on the small landing strip which my home town citizens term, perhaps rather grandiosely, Benedum *Airport.*

It had been, as usual, a fascinating weekend at Dom's house. I had gone to New York on Monday, a week before, done some radio and tv interviews, and a couple of lectures.

I always looked forward to these hours with Don. My schedule completed, I had taken the opportunity to drop

West Virginia businessman Gray Barker, who publishes The Saucerian Review, *is the author of THEY KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS* (1956, *University Books*). *Mr. Barker, in addition to describing a number of theories about the origin of the UFO, told how one by one the leading figures among flying saucer researchers, who had challenged the official denial that saucers come from outer space, had been silenced. Nothing had "happened" to them—they'd just been silenced. Mr. Barker's present article again describes these strange happenings.*

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over to his place in Jersy City on Friday.

You never know quite how to take Dominick C. Lucchesi.

By day Dominick C. Lucchesi is a highly paid gyroscope technician who works for the Bendix people. But by night, when he has company, he is the arbiter of a magical world in which he tells how he has projected his astral body, and has on tap a thousand theories on what flying saucers can or cannot be. The night before, for example, some friends had dropped in and we had descended into his brother's "laboratory" in the basement, where Dom turned out the lights, stood at one end of the huge room, and announced he wanted to "demonstrate the human aura."

Now the human aura, as I understand it, is supposed to be some kind of exhalation surrounding the body, the color of which reflects the personality or physical condition of that body. Certain occultists or "adepts" say they can see the human aura surrounding a person in broad daylight. That I don't know. At least I have never seen one. If I did, I think I would go out and buy an extra fifth.

Anyway, Dom had stood there in the darkness and asked if we could see his aura, while he went into some kind of deep breathing exercises (all put on I suspect), presumably to make his aura stronger and more visible. Everyone looked. Under the spell of Dom's hypnotic patter, running all the while, some said they could see little flashes of fire where he was standing. Me, I saw nothing.

But now I knew that everything Dom would say would be in dead seriousness. He hated to see me go. We had been at this thing together ever since the inception of the International Flying Saucer Bureau, when Dom had believed the saucers were built by the Air Force and stated he could build one in six months, given the money and facilities. But after what happened in Bridgeport, Conn., I think he had changed his mind long ago.

We swung into the parking area and Dom guided the immense Buick into a stall. His brother, Armand, or "Om," as he was nicknamed, who fooled around with old cars, had rebuilt this one for him. It must have been a '47 or '48 model—one of the big jobs made for a chauffeur to drive. I remembered it was the same car in which he had met me at that same airport three years before, in the fall of 1953, just after the excitement had really started. After I received Dom's tape I had put in a call to him, and early the next morning grabbed one of the four daily

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flights out of Clarksburg. I remember now that at that time I thought that if I could get together with Dom and we could go to Bridgeport together—we might decide whether we were being told a science fiction tale, or *the thing*.

After going to Bridgeport Dom and I figured it was the real thing all right, though underneath it all, I suppose, we had always wondered. Why a grown man could be frightened almost out of reason by three men who were dressed rather oddly.

I checked my baggage, confirmed my reservation and we walked into the coffee shop. I decided to have breakfast over again, ordered an egg and some bacon. Dom decided on tomato juice. Never before had I seen a man put sugar in tomato juice.

We were silent again for a while.

"It's like this, Dom. It's happened, we've investigated every possible angle, and now the book is out with all of it in it. Maybe I'm going to look like a fool, maybe people are going to laugh at me—oh that's all right, they've laughed at me ever since I got this crazy idea to chase saucers—but now they'll be doing it all over the country!"

"In a few years no one will be laughing at us, Gray."

"Look, we've had a fine time and a lot of fun. But now I'm leaving. Honestly, Dom, tell me how you feel about the man."

"He had something, Gray. I only wish I had got to him before it happened."

We didn't have to mention the man's name. We both automatically knew whom we were talking about.

The one man we knew of who must know something very definite and very positive about the saucers.

What they were, where they came from, and possibly why they were here.

Bender.

Coral E. Lorenzen, head of one large saucer organization, said Bender had made up the story, that it was an excuse to get out of a field of research which had become too puzzling, too much work.

We had both known Bender too well to believe that, however.

I suppose the Flatwoods, W. Va., "monster" had been responsible, in a roundabout way, for my knowing Bender well, as it had been responsible for a lot of other things. Whatever it had been, it had sailed through the night sky over a small town near Clarksburg, almost like a shooting star. Only it wasn't.

A group of youngsters just leaving a playground

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saw it halt, hover, then fall to the ground on a nearby hilltop, where it pulsated dim to bright, alternately lighting up the entire hill.

With more curiosity than bravery, they climbed the hill to see what it was. It was almost like looking into Hell. Down over the other side of the hill they saw a huge glowing sphere, and then from their left something came at them!

Something like a man, they said, but about 15 feet tall, something unknown and incredible, a creature that had eyes, but eyes from which light rays projected.

Very little else is known about the Flatwoods "monster." The witnesses didn't stay long enough to find out just what it was. They fled down the hill in panic; it was necessary to treat some of them for shock.

Before that happened I had been an average sort of guy, a fellow who closed his office at five and went home and read a book. But after looking into the Flatwoods incident I decided there must be something to this talk about flying saucers after all.

I investigated the incident because I was curious, and because I thought it was a hoax. I didn't find out what the Flatwoods monster was, but I did find out what it *wasn't*. First, it wasn't any hoax. The kids were telling the truth. Second, it wasn't anything that n o r m a l l y walked the face of the earth.

I saw Bender's ad in a magazine. He had formed a club or organization, called the International Flying Saucer Bureau, which would investigate and collect information on the flying saucer mystery. I sent a copy of my "monster" report to him. Four days later I received an air mail letter. Bender, too, thought there was something to it, even though the newspapers had laughed at the children's story.

I was amazed at the prospectus he sent me. I knew the Air Force was trying desperately to figure the saucer enigma at Wright Field, but I didn't know that civilians were doing anything about it. Bender was receiving membership applications from all over the U.S.; he also had branches and members in other countries.

He was forming a department within the Bureau, he said, which would assure expert attention to selected reports. He had lined up an aeronautical expert, an astronomer, and a photographic technician, to serve in the department of investigation, as he called it. He was looking for someone to head the thing. Shortly thereafter I was asked to head the depart-

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ment.

I believe that given a little time we would have come up with something; I believe we would have found out what the saucers were, for we were set up to do it. If, through what must have been some fantastic accident, Bender himself had not run onto something so terrifying and dangerous it changed a warm, personal friend into a shaken, changed individual overnight.

It was certain that Dom was closer to the "Bender Mystery," as we had begun to term it, than any other man, even myself. Within closer reach of Bridgeport than I, Dom was able to make frequent visits to Bender's home while the IFSB was still operative. As aeronautical consultant in the department of investigation he found it important to get together personally with Bender about once a month. At that early date Dom felt flying saucers behaved no differently than machines then possible to build on earth, though he didn't discredit Bender's contention that they could come from space.

We should have seen it all coming, for some odd things already had been happening, though we could never put a definite finger on their being connected directly with saucers. I remember receiving Dom's urgent tape recording and letting it lay around the office a couple of days before playing it. That was during my busy season. I operate an agency which books pictures for theatres, mainly the outdoor type open only during the summer months. Consequently I am tied up with practically no time to think about anything besides motion pictures for about six months out of the year. But when I finally hooked up the recorder and listened to the tape, I telephoned my secretary and told her the show was all hers for a few days.

DOM was finishing his oddly seasoned tomato juice as I hauled out the dog-eared copy from my portfolio.

"You probably didn't know I had my secretary copy your report," I remarked. I sat there, reading again those first disturbing paragraphs.

After some personal amenities Dom had got to the point:

"Actually, Gray, *some very interesting things have happened*, and the only way I can describe these to you is by using tape.

"As far as my being investigated by anyone is concerned, no one that I know of has interrogated Augie Roberts (Roberts was the photographic consultant for IFSB and lived near Dom in Jersey City) or myself—unless it might have been someone with whom we are well acquainted, and whom we might not have realized was

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an investigator of one type or another."

The tape related how he and Augie had planned to visit Bender that day, and how the car had developed trouble, Augie telephoned Bender to let him know they couldn't make it. Dom saw a puzzled look come over Augie's face, and began listening to his end of the conversation. Suddenly Augie put his hand over the receiver and looked at Dom.

"Bender's acting real funny," he whispered, and continued listening.

"What is it, Al, are you holding something back?"

Augie motioned for Dom to come over and share the receiver. Dom heard Al say something about *Space Review*, the publication issued by the IFSB.

Dom's recording continued:

"Al told Augie that *Space Review* WOULD come out on October 15th, but whether it would come out after that was something else."

"It seems something strange has occurred in IFSB."

"Well, Augie was quite persistent, and kept pushing Al for more information. Finally Al stated bluntly, *I know the secret of the disks."*

"Now the way I gather it, Al had run across something important during his study of the saucer mystery. This information was evidently the solution. In his position as head of the IFSB he was in what one might picture as the focal point for all the saucer information being run down by the hundreds of IFSB members. He had run across the secret unexpectedly while going through all this material."

"When Bender learned what he felt was the answer, he evidently wrote it all down and submitted it to someone, maybe to a magazine, maybe to an expert for an opinion—just whom he wouldn't say."

"THREE MEN CAME TO HIS HOUSE WITH THAT VERY SAME PIECE OF PAPER IN THEIR HANDS. THEY TOLD BENDER HE HAD CRACKED THE RIDDLE, THAT HE HAD FOUND OUT THE ANSWER TO THE FLYING SAUCER MYSTERY."

"Then they filled him in with details."

"When they got through with him Bender said he turned white as a sheet and got sick. He couldn't get anything to stay on his stomach for three long days."

"The oddest thing about the three men, was their rather strange dress: they all had on dark suits and black hats."

That was not the end of the story. The three men had confiscated back issues of *Space*

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Review, and told Bender to shut up about saucers. Shortly thereafter Bender would close down the IFSB tighter than the heads on Cugat's drums and refund all unearned membership dues.

"There is something that smells to me in this whole business, Gray." Dom continued. "Just because Bender is out of action doesn't mean *we* are knocked out. We must try to find out what Al found out...We don't have the *key*, that's our only trouble. But if Al found it, *we* can find it. We have a clue in the fact they confiscated the back issues of *Space Review*. There must be something in those issues!

"I believe we must look for something fantastic, for that is just how Al put it about what he had learned. The way Augie quoted Al, he said, 'I went into the *fantastic* and came up with the answer.'

"The question now is this: what should we do about it? Do you wish to try and get at the bottom of it, or are you, by chance, now in the same position as Al?"

AS WE sat there in the coffee shop I went over in my mind just what we HAD done about it, how I had collected reams of material on the case, how we had gone to Bridgeport to interview Bender, how we had evolved dozens of theories as to what Bender had found out...

And now we had come up with a complete blank.

Bender wasn't talking. He was afraid to. He didn't even want to hear the word "saucer" mentioned, as if he were afraid of the mere sound of it.

I had asked Bender why the saucers didn't interest him any more.

"Was it because you found out they were too ordinary to be interesting (I was hinting they might have turned out to be government devices), or that what you discovered about them is painful for you to think about?"

"The latter."

DOM AND I walked out onto the observation deck.

"I often ask myself if it all really did happen," I began.

"I think that way myself," Dom replied, "but then I say to myself, 'yes, it did for sure. I know it did because I was a part of it.' Do you believe we will ever know all the facts behind Al's 'shush-up'?"

"I hope so," I replied. "But I've almost given up. You remember that Al told me right after it happened that when he felt he could reveal the entire matter, I would be the first to know. I wanted that to happen before I wrote the book exposing the whole thing."

"Maybe the book will crack it open."

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"That's the reason I wrote it. I felt like this, Dom: Probably a lot of people have run across the answer and have been silenced. Maybe they were even more afraid than Bender, and didn't blurt out a single word of it. Maybe there wasn't anyone pushing them, like you, Augie and me. I figured that once the book got around a lot of people with similar experiences would read it and decide to talk."

"Maybe they'll still be afraid."

"Maybe they will be, but who knows?"

"I wonder how we would react if we were visited," Dom murmured. "Somehow I believe we'd run out and scream the whole thing out to the world. I get mad whenever I think of it. Extremely mad!"

"You can't tell, Dom. The most interesting factor of these visits is that when such a person is so intimidated whoever tells the person to shut up does so in such a way or imparts such terrifying information that the victim is scared almost out of his wits. Maybe it would be the same with you—OR me!"

"When you really think it out," Dom mused, "all kind of possibilities come up. Suppose you were Bender and the three men came to visit you. Suppose you asked them for credentials and they showed them to you. Only instead of showing you a card one of them just dematerialized, then popped back into view at another end of the room. I guess if a thing like that happened to me—maybe..."

"Anyway, we should communicate it to each other. I hope we can do that—if it happens."

Saucer researchers *were* being shut up.

There had been E. R. Jarrold, of The Australian Flying Saucer Bureau, in Australia; John Stuart, of Flying Saucer Researchers in New Zealand; and a lot more we knew about but couldn't exactly put our fingers on. These people were too frightened to tell us anything.

"One thing they inevitably ask me at lectures," I said, "Is, 'if so *many* researchers have been shut up, why haven't *you* been silenced too?'"

"That would be easy to answer," Dom believed. "You and I probably know a lot about the saucer mystery, but in the cases of these 'shush-ups' one or two common factors have been involved. The victims either know some important key to the mystery or have in their possessions pieces of metal or residue evidently from space ships."

"I guess that's it," I agreed. "We don't have the *key*."

Dom thought for a moment.

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"I think we *can* find it if we look long enough. You know, I think our main fault is that we know TOO MUCH in general about saucers. We're always bringing the dozens of theories of saucer origin to mind and trying to fit them to Bender and the others. Maybe if we knew less we could attack the problem from a better vantage point.

"Maybe we are concentrating on the wrong angle.

The truth, Bender has said, is *fantastic.*

"What would be *fantastic* to you Dom—really now? Or to Bender, who had probably thought of everything in the course of his research and was really dulled to fantasy?"

"Maybe some simple thing, something we haven't thought of, that would scare us into a tizzy if we found out it was for real."

We could probably guess the rest if we only knew who the three men were. Bender had hinted they were from the government, but he must have been deliberately trying to throw us off the track. Government investigators do not dress so conspiciously. And if they threaten people they investigate, that's certainly a new one on me. Most agents of the different investigative and intelligence services don't volunteer information, they just ask questions. They hesitate to venture an opinion on anything; they don't like to say it's raining outside unless it is cleared by proper authority.

But if *not* government men, what fantastic sponsorship was responsible for their activities?

It seemed Dom and I deliberately shied away from getting too deeply into the three-men proposition. Though I know he often thought the same as I about it.

OF ALL the theories we had run through our minds as to what Bender could have found out, the one about Antarctica seemed to stick out the most obviously.

Shortly before the three men came, Bender suggested a strange project to his colleagues of The Australian Flying Saucer Bureau and The Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New Zealand, the two other large civilian agencies probing saucers in 1953.

It was to be termed "Project X."

Evidently concerned about the rash of saucers reports that had broken out in the "down under" countries, Bender suggested they go through all their sightings reports, ferret out those which gave directions of arrival and departure. These reports they would chart on a map. Lines would be drawn for each direction reported, and if the lines tended to show a point of convergence or intersec-

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tion, such a spot on the map might indicate a place of saucer origin, a point of rendevous, maybe even a saucer base!

Unfortunately Bender closed down before the project got underway in Australia and New Zealand.

"I THINK we're on the right track," Dom started, but was interrupted by the loudspeaker calling out my flight. We rose.

"Don't look like that; I'm heavily insured," I joked.

"One never knows," he said. "I don't want to appear morbid, but now and then I suppose I experience that fear that every saucer researcher feels. Maybe it's a fear of the unknown. The fear he's looking into something he has no business being in."

I could figure what Dom was thinking. The entire Bender files were in my brief case. If someone or something wanted to get rid of all the evidence—a lot of planes had been crashing mysteriously. Perhaps that was why...

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the ships in the sky

by...GEORGE H. SMITH

It was a long, long time ago when the Cloud Ship came...

IT WAS a Saint's day and one of those mornings for which England is noted, a morning so misty that it "made a sort of twilight amid the gross and watery vapours." High Mass had been held at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Lynn as usual and now the townspeople and farmers were coming out the door and sniffing the fresh, wet smell of the earth as they thought with pleasure of the things they could do and the rest they would get on this day, so different from the rest of the days they spent in endless toil. For this was the Middle Ages and the fate of most of them was the same as that of all the other peasants of their time.

The priest stood before the door of the church admonishing some of the younger blades about their too frequent trips to the local alehouse. As he turned to accept a basket of eggs, the tithe of a widowed woman, a shout went up from a group of boys who had been among the first to rush out when the services were over.

"Father! Father!" they shouted, running towards him.

It had to be a demon! How else could the stranger have come down like that from the sky? Who were these men, actually, who were known to be on the cloud ships seen in the sky? Were they demons—or...?

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"What is it, boys?" the priest asked. "Must you be so noisy on the good saint's day?"

"But father," one of them caught his breath long enough to say, "there's a ship's anchor caught on that old tomb in the corner of the churchyard."

"A ship's anchor with a rope going up into the sky!" someone else added.

"Now, boys, when was the last time you came to confession?" the priest said. "Ship's anchors and ropes into the sky indeed!"

"We saw it...we saw it," they insisted. "Come and see for yourself, father. We're not lying. Peter the Blacksmith is there and he saw it too."

Convinced of the boy's sincerity by their voices, the priest lifted up his robe and hurried after them into the section of the churchyard where the nobility and landowners of the area had been buried in tombs. As he came through the heavy, soaking mist he saw a crowd of his parishoners standing about staring at something on one of the large stone tombs. He pushed his way through them murmuring assurances to the obviously astounded and frightened people. Then he saw it and stopped dead in his tracks. It was a large iron ship's anchor and stretching upward from it into the mist was a cable which moved as though something or someone up above was pulling on it.

"A cloud ship...a cloud ship," the people were muttering. "Listen, father, you can hear the people on it talking...way up above."

The priest had heard of the so-called cloud ships which had been seen all over Europe during the last few years. Ships that reputedly floated high above the earth and that were seen moving among the clouds. He also had heard the tale the Bishop Agobard of Lyons had recorded years before of the three men and a woman from one of the ships that he had rescued from a mob. From these four strange people, the Bishop reported learing that they had come from a place called Magonia and had lost their ship and that all the others had been killed or had died. A strange story, indeed, but a story based on the word of a priest and a prince of the church. There were other stories, too, of knives and other objects falling from the skies. One of these had fallen through the roof window of a house in Bristol. And now here was this strange thing, right here in Lynn before his very door.

He could hear the shouts of the strange high-flying mariners as they strove to free the ship from its accidental berth.

"What does it mean, father" someone asked. "What is happening?"

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"Wait...wait," he tried to calm them. "Whatever it is, it is God's will that they are there."

"Look!" a woman screamed shrilly pointing upward and a gasp went up from all those who stood about the tomb. Directly above them, just beginning to appear through the mist was the figure of a man coming down the cable hand over hand toward the anchor.

"It is God's will...it must be God's will," the priest said softly rubbing unbelieving eyes. "But how can such things be?"

"He is coming down to free the anchor," Peter the Smith said. "They couldn't get it loose by just pulling at it and have sent a man down to pull it free."

Surely the blacksmith was right because now the stranger loomed directly over their heads and they could see him plainly. For a moment they stood frozen with astonishment and then the more timid of them began to edge away. Finally the women and children broke and ran back toward the church but the priest, the blacksmith and several husky peasants stood their ground as the man from above landed feet first on top of the tomb and began to tug at the anchor.

"Grab him!" someone yelled, "and we'll find out if he's man or demon. Stand by to exorcise him, father." And before the priest could interfere, the men grabbed the stranger and after a brief struggle bore him to the ground.

"We've got him...we've got him, father," one of them panted. "Send somebody for the holy water. We've captured the demon from the sky."

"Let him go," the priest said. "He is no demon but a man like us."

The stranger was still struggling in the brawny arms of the men of Lynn but suddenly his strength seemed to give way and he began choking and gasping for breath. They all watched bewildered and in a few minutes the man from the sky was dead.

"...he gave up the ghost, stifled by the breath of our gross air as a shipwrecked mariner is stifled in the sea." writes the chronicler Gervase of Tilbury. "Moreover his fellows above, judging him to be lost, cut the cable after an hour's wait and sailed away into the sky."

Gervase says that he saw the anchor himself, the same anchor the people of the village had seen caught on the tomb. They had taken it and worked it into the door of their church in commemoration of the strange visit of the men from the sky.

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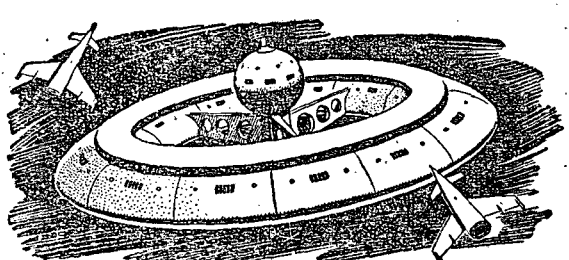
The cloud ships of the Middle Ages were a mystery almost as great as the flying saucers of our time. All that Gervase of Tilbury and Archbishop Agobard tell us of them is that they were seen in the sky and were known not to be of supernatural nature since there were men aboard them.

A strange story but surely no stranger than those we hear everyday about unusual sightings in the sky. And no stranger than other stories that have come down to us from practically every age. The oddest part of this particular one is that it is far more scientific than some of those we hear today about little green men. The way the man from the sky strangled in our atmosphere is quite accurate for any being from another planet unequipped with a spacesuit would do so despite the tales we hear of creatures from outer space walking about with no protective covering at all and talking to carefully chosen witnesses.

I wonder what a man from the Middle Ages would call an Unidentified Flying Object. Maybe he would call it a Cloud Ship. It doesn't take too much imagination to interpret this whole story into modern terms. Ships were of course the only thing that the Bishop and Gervase of Tilbury had with which to compare the strange sightings of their times. The idea of the anchor and cable were carried over from the ship concept. The only peculiar part is their saying the man strangled in the air of earth for the people of that time knew nothing of outer space or of the possibility of other planets and other races. Gervase couldn't possibly have known that a being from another planet would likely strangle in our atmosphere.

They called them Cloud Ships then. I wonder what they'll be calling U. F. O.'s a thousand years from now.



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how to be a saucer author

by...DEAN McLAUGHLIN

A spokeman for the "flying crockery" school examines case against certain writers.

UNLESS you're squeamish about how you make money, you could do a lot worse than to write a book about flying saucers.

Anyone can do it. Auto mechanics, hot dog salesmen, and bird watchers—all have written saucer books. There's no reason why you can't, too.

However, people will believe the things you write a lot more quickly if they think you're an astronomer. God knows why, but they think astronomers know something.

Therefore, make yourself out to be an astronomer if you possibly can. For example, if you have ever been within a hundred miles of a big observatory, refer to yourself casually as "of" Palomar, or Mount Wilson, or whichever one you want to be associated with.

Don't hesitate to stretch the truth. In a book about saucers, you can't let little things like facts get on your way. Remember that for saucer success—that is, for perennial sale in Southern California—there is just one

Dean McLaughlin is well-known in Astronomical and Geological circles, but is not the author of this article. Not that *Dean McLaughlin! Many people interested in UFOlogy have to admit that there have been some unfortunate contributions to the field—sloppily written and still more sloppily edited—and also some rather strange personal "testimonies". The present article is prompted by the existence of this material.*

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basic rule. Give the readers what they want.

In a saucer book, this means insisting that saucers exist. Your readers will insist on being told that the saucers are not mere illusions, hoaxes, things imagined, or somebody's windborne bloomers. They want to be assured that there are real, honest-to-goodness flying saucers.

So tell them.

One saucer author didn't do this. He tried to disprove the saucers. Financially, his book was a miserable flop.

Your readers want to be told the saucers are space ships from another world—with people inside. Don't disappoint them, or they won't buy your book.

Furthermore, they'll want photographs. Photographs are the final, absolute proff of anything you say.

Anyway, you can say they are.

You *could* crib all the photos you need from the newspapers, but you shouldn't. Authentic new photographs are one of the major attractions of a saucer book. Besides, it's *much* more fun to make your own.

If you are any good at all in a darkroom, you won't have any trouble running bales of perfectly good photos with significantly saucer-shaped blotches. Or you might take pictures of actual objects you can pass off as saucers. Almost anything disc-shaped will do—clay-pigeons, sun helmets, lids off garbage pails, the top of a chicken brooder . . .

So that no one can figure out what your pictures are actually of, it's a good idea to ruin the camera lens with steel wool, and make sure it's our of focus. Any details which are still apparent you can pass off as landing gear, pilot's cabin, portholes, or condensers for animal magnetism. Whatever comes into your head.

One of the problems you must deal with is other saucer books. No matter what you write, some of these books will make claims considerably different from your own. A lot of your readers will have to read these books, and many of them will come to yours convinced that the other books are Gospel truth. It is up to you to win them over.

Flies are caught better with honey. Speak tolerantly of the other books. You might even point out where they happen to agree with you, just to prove that if you're lying, you're not the only one.

As for the differences, attribute them—not to the fact that they are whole-cloth fiction—but to honest errors. Explain that the other books, though written with no intent to deceive, are not the final word. Because their author's memories are faulty,

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because they have been led astray by doubtful facts, because—while meaning well—they have made mistakes—the books are not accurate. Only your own book—you will say—is the whole and accurate truth.

Under no circumstances should suggest that the other books are frauds. The suggestion might cause some minds to suspect that your book, too, is no more truthful than the journals of the Burlington Liar's Club. It would be one thing if you were telling the truth, but since you're just out for money, it's best to let well enough alone.

Finally, your book must have a title. It should include the words *flying saucers* or, at the very least, *saucers*. To all prospective customers, these words will intantly identify your book for what it is.

You have your choice between two ways to tell the Truth about the Saucers: a "here's proof" book, or "I Talked With A Martian."

If you decide to write a proof book, the collected works of Charles Fort are an absolute must. Without Fort's books, you would have to spend weeks concocting your evidence.

Fort has done the job for you. His books are packed with reports of strange and impossible phenomena which may or may not have happened. For example:

A fifty pound chunk of ice, cut square, fell from a clear sky near Wartburg, Texas, on July 19, 1924. It almost brained Uriah Gropp, who was sleeping in a hobo jungle.

Gropp lugged the ice to a local butcher shop, where it was weighed. Exactly fifty pounds. He mailed it to Columbia University to be studied.

It never arrived!

Only three days before, in Ipswich, Mass, an ice truck was reported missing. *It was never found!*

Ignore the explanation Fort supplies. Instead, tell your readers that this incident proves saucers exist.

Don't try to make it logical; it might be difficult, and you could only confuse your readers. Saucer addicts aren't accustomed to logic. Instead, use phrases like, "This can only be explained by ..." or "The only explanation is ..."

Such transcendental reasoning can't be argued with.

When you have proved the existence of saucers, tell your readers where they come from. Venus, Mars, or extra-solar planets are the usual choices, but it doesn't really matter. One place is as good as another. If you can't make up your mind, flip a coin.

It's not hard to prove that the planet you choose is the right one. Suit the details to

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your individual case, but it should be enough to say astronomy has ruled out all the other possibilities. If you feel you *must* say more, say astronomy prove it can *only* be the planet you've picked.

You should also speculate on ways and means by which the saucers operate. Write learnedly—as if you knew what you were talking about—of negative and neutral gravity, the aerodynamic advantages of the saucer design, and magnetic lines of force.

Be careful, though, *not* to make sense. You want to convince your readers that the saucers are the product of a science far in advance of our own. Consequently, no attempt at explanation should be understandable.

Your readers will also expect you to reveal the motives of the saucer people. Since this is one of the subects on which they have not made up their minds, you are free to proclaim the saucer people benevolent, friendly, indifferent, or unspeakable, whichever strikes your fancy.

No matter which you choose, remark significantly that the saucers first appeared almost precisely two years after Hiroshima, and only a year from the time of the Bikini experiments.

(If you have already proved the saucers have watched us since the days of Ezekial's wheel, explain that you only mean the *latest* visitation of the saucers.)

Carefully choose your other evidence to corrobrate your particular claim. If you want your readers to believe the worst, tell them about disasters which you can blame on the saucers. Start off with a few big air crashes, and build up to even more horrible things.

Half-remembered, the Texas City disaster of some years back is tailor made for your purpose, and, though a little more difficult, the Chicago Fire will be no serious problem to the talented liar. The destruction of Pompeii, the Sack of Rome, the San Francisco Earthquake, and even the Rape of Nanking, are also fair game.

However, you'd have a hard time blaming Hiroshima on the saucers. You'd better leave that one alone.

To clinch your argument, mention a few disappearances of the *Mary Celeste* and Judge Crater type, and for the final, really grisly thrill, tell your readers of the rains of blood and shredded meat which Charles Fort reports.

Then go on, almost hysterically, to accuse the Powers-That-Be-In-Washington of Concealing The Facts From The People. This, you will say, is why the Air Force continues to deny the existence of saucers in spite of evidence such as you have invented.

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If, on the other hand, you decide to prove that the saucers are friendly—or, anyway, not *un*friendly—simply point out that after almost ten years of intensive visitation, no saucer has done any damage or harmed a human being.

This wouldn't be as exciting, of course. You'd do better to declare the saucer people are outright fiends.

In writing this book, remember you have an advantage: saucers can never be d i s p r o v e d. The evidence against a thing that doesn't exist has to be negative evidence—an *absence* of evidence. In the face of such evidence as you can invent, a skeptic is helpless. Disbelief withers. The advocate of saucers always has the upper hand.

You may prefer to tell of a saucer pilot and the things he talked about. You can even describe a joy-ride in his saucer. There is certainly nothing to stop you.

Using this approach, you don't have to prove the existence of saucers. You start with the assumption they exist, just as if there could be no doubt.

Nor do you have to resort to proof to back up any of your claims. It is enough to tell your readers that the saucer man told you so.

You must write your story in the first person, as if it actually happened to you. It's not difficult. Just say you met a saucer man and chatted with him for a while about this and that. Your readers will be satisfied.

If you really want to impress them, tell of the strange sense of something about to happen which you felt immediately before the meeting.

Naturally, you will have to describe the saucer people. This will not be difficult because they look just like other people. To make them look like anything else would put too much strain on your readers' imaginations.

You can, of course, make them short or tall, small or large, and their hair can be any color you please. Even bright green, if your stomach can stand it. If you want to, you can even make the proportions of their limbs and bodies a little abnormal, but don't get carried away. You don't want your readers to think the saucer men are freaks.

Under no circumstances should the saucer people be any color but white. A dark "space tan" is permissible if you make it very clear it is only a tan. Otherwise, no skin color but white can be allowed. Your readers would find it hard to believe that any race so far advanced is not their own.

To make the best impression, your people ought to be magnificent in appearance.

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The men should be as handsome as Greek statues, and the women should be indescribably beautiful. There should not, however, be the faintest suggestion of the more carnal aspects of sex. These people, remember, are far above us.

The saucer people must have no disgusting habits. Their table manners must be impeccable. Their clothes and customs should religiously conform to what we think is decent. Keep in mind always that you want your readers to believe the saucer people are a perfect race. They must act the part.

Their language must be English. Any other tongue would be an affront to all English-speaking people, including the bulk of your readers. The only permissible alternative is to make the saucer people telepathic, having no spoken language.

The society of the saucer people must be Utopian in every way you can imagine. Your saucer man should describe it at some length. Their super-scientific technology provides them with every conceivable luxury. They have no wars. Their lives span centuries. Hard labor is unknown. Once in a while, they chase butterflies. There is nothing not within their power.

Beyond the broad outlines of the Ideal Life, you are free to preach whatever panaceas you please. Care, however, would be wise in describing their system of goverment. For example, many of your readers would be horribly shocked to discover that the saucer people live in socialism. They might even prefer to stop believing in saucers.

The best thing is to avoid politics. Tell your readers that the saucer people have learned to live in harmony with one another without laws or any form of compulsion.

Obviously, people of such civilized behavior would be advanced far beyond us. This is exactly the impression you want to give.

In a book of this type, the saucer people must be friendly. Otherwise, you'd have a hard time explaining why you're still alive.

Exactly how friendly is up to you. Perhaps they are only midly interested in us, amazed that a people so uncivilized could have advanced so far. However, it is usually better to tell your readers that the saucer people have come to save us from ourselves. They have a message which, if faithfully obeyed, will end war, abolish disease, and help you clean up on the horses.

You, of course, will be the chosen one to bring their message to the world. The message can be anything you feel like saying.

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You can preach any craze, fad, or cult you happen to believe in. Anything at all. Any opinions you care to express, you can put in the saucer man's mouth. You can preach to an audience beyond your most fantastic dreams.

And get paid for it, too.

But don't proclaim your message too soon. Save it for a climactic chapter near the end. Before you tell your readers the secret of the ages, of the universe, or how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, you must tell of your adventure with the saucer man.

If you like, this may be only a protracted conversation—the saucer man doing most of the talking. It can ramble over as many subjects as you think you know something about.

The planet the saucers come from is not so important in a book of this type, since in no case will it resemble any planet known to astronomy. You may, if you really want to, give it a familiar name—the usual choices are Mars and Venus—but by the time the saucer man is through describing it, no astronomer would recognize it.

That, of course, would be the fault of the astronomers, since they have never been there.

If you prefer, you can invent your own world—a planet that astronomers have overlooked because it's hidden behind the sun or among the asteroids, or underneath the Earth, which is flat. Or, if you don't want to bother making up your mind, say that saucer people live on all the planets.

To go deeper into the origins of the saucer people, say that they are descended from survivors of Atlantis. Many saucer addicts will be delighted to learn this, being already firm believers in Atlantis. Unfortunately, unless you are particularly talented, you cannot do the same for people who believe in ghosts.

Personally, you may prefer to believe in Mu. Nevertheless, you should give your readers Atlantis. Atlantis has more of a following, and most of your readers will find it more satisfying.

Since the saucers are suppose to be the product of a superscientific culture, you won't be able to explain how they fly. Don't let this discourage you—go ahead and explain anyway.

The best way is to let the saucer man do the talking. Be careful, of course, that the explanation makes no sense whatsoever. Load it with words at random from a physics text, to make it sound impressive.

The whole idea is to make your readers *think* it's being explained. The fact that nothing gets across they will attribute—not to the fact

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that you are really saying nothing—but to their ignorance of the saucer people's Higher Science.

As long as you're making things up, you might as well be thorough. Since nothing restricts you to the familiar, disc-shaped things, tell your readers that the saucers are short range scout craft. The true space ships, from which the saucers are launched, never enter the Earth's atmosphere. These mother ships have never been seen, so you can make them any shape you please. For photographs, therefore, you can use anything handy—a stovepipe, a bowling ball, or the chimney off a hurricane lamp. An old shoe will do.

If your saucer man invites you aboard for a jaunt, you will have to describe the saucer inside and out. The simplest way is to draw a few diagrams and sandwich them into your book. Be careful to make them agree—at least reasonably well—with the features visible in your photographs.

The saucer should be crammed to the portholes with marvelous gadgets. Don't bother to explain how they work. They're not supposed to be understandable. Just describe what they do, or just let them squat where they are, blinking their lights and wiggling needles. Don't give them any moving parts. Moving parts are something a person can understand. It would ruin the illusion.

If you tell your readers about the mother ships, they will be very disappointed if you don't visit one. Such a visit would allow you to describe any gadgets you couldn't squeeze aboard the saucer. It would also give you a chance to meet more saucer people; if it is difficult for your readers to make sense of what one saucer man says, imagine how baffled they'll be by a whole gang of them.

In regards to all adventures with saucers, one note of caution. To make your book look like a documentary account, you'll have to give dates and times for your fabulous journey. Since it would be awkward if someone could prove you were somewhere else, it is usually best to limit yourself yourself to overnight excursions. Choose carefully nights when you were alone.

(A tale like this would be something new to tell a suspicious wife when asked where you were last night. Try it sometime.)

While it isn't absolutely necessary, your readers will be a bit more convinced if you can supply a few witnesses. Witnesses are the final, incontrovertable proof that your story is true.

They don't have to be witnesses to much. Maybe they

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saw a saucer at about the time you took your ride, or maybe they didn't see you the night you were gone. Witnesses like this should be easy to find. They shouldn't cost much, either.

If you follow these directions, your saucer book is sure to make money. However, if you have a true story to tell—if you *have* actually met and talked with a saucer man—if you rode in his saucer—if he gave you a message to proclaim to the world—your story would be far different from the one here outlined.

So you might as well not write. It wouldn't sell, and no one would believe a word.

When you have finished your book, you should consider where to have it published. Don't bother offering it to any reputable publisher. It would only be rejected with the same unsanitary haste usually lavished on dead cats and used tea bags.

Rather, offer your book to a comparatively small publisher who is just as eager to make money as you are. Be careful, though, that the publisher you choose is not so fly-by-night that you will have trouble collecting your royalties. There is no sense in writing a saucer book if you can't get money for it.

An additional source of revenue will be your lecture tour. Even if you have no stage presence at all, you should make one. It should begin as soon as your book is published and, properly managed, it will last until your voice gives out. Every large city is practically crawling with people who wlil pay honest money to hear you speak the same lies you wrote.

Smaller towns will be good for one night stands. It's amazing what people will pay to see if there isn't anything better to do.

A profitable sideline to your lectures will be the sale of autographed copies of your book. Get the books from your publisher at a discount, and sell them for a little more than the usual price. If you like (and why not?—there's money in it) you might also sell authentic photographs of saucers and saucer people, and little souvenirs you slipped in your pocket when the saucer man was looking the other way.

You must be careful, though, that you remember thoroughly everything you wrote. It would be awkward if you were caught contradicting yourself from the platform.

Above all, NEVER go anywhere near a college town—there are fiends in those places who would ask some very embarassing questions.

You should also, by this time, be hard at work on

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your second book about saucers.

This one can approach the subject from any angle you please, since now you will have established a personal following. You can, of course, describe further encounters with saucer men, or report sensational new evidence of saucers' presence and or intentions. But it would be better if your second book was not a retread of your first. You should strike out—break new ground.

Study the bibliography presented below. Study it carefully.

Then write of the religion of the saucer people—the only True Faith, or prove that Shakespeare's plays were written by a saucer man! Who can disprove your statement?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The conscientious saucer author will want to produce a superior product, although his book will probably sell no matter how awful it is. I have nevertheless composed this list of readings which will not be particularly helpful. Some of these readings are primarily instructive in matters of basic psychology.

Instructive Examples:

Asimov, Isaac: The Endochronic Properties of Recublimated Thiotimoline

Graves, Robert: The Nazarene Bible Restored

Raspe, Rudolph Erich: Adventures of Baron Munchausen

Locke, Richard Adams: Great Astronomical Discoveries Lately Made by Sir John Herschel, LL.D., F.R.S., etc., at the Cape of Good Hope.

Velikovsky, Immanuel: Worlds in Collision

Shaver, Richard S.: I Remember Lemuria

Technique & Customer Psychology:

Freud, Sigmund: General Introduction to Psychoanalysis

Hoffer, Eric: The True Believer

Orwell, George: 1984

James, William: Varieties of Religious Experience

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the farmer in the dell

by DOROTHY H. EDGERLY

He could feel it's thoughts-evil greedy thoughts that menaced the humans he liked.

I HEARD Melisande calling before I reached the end of the lane. There was terror in her call, so I made the open fields in nothing flat. She was standing before the old Higgins' house, facing it, her red hair gleaming in the sun. The look in her eyes, as she turned and ran toward me showed me that she was frightened.

"Jeb!" She put both hands on my arm and pulled me towards the house.

Now I like Melisande to take hold of my arm or my hand, or even my finger, so at first I didn't speak, for fear that she'd take her hands away. I *liked* them on my arm.

"Jeb!" She shook me impatiently. "Jeb, what is it? It's evil! I can't breathe!" Her green eyes were terrified.

I threw my mind forward, around. There was nothing moving in the meadow. I was just going to say so, when I felt it. Little tendrils of evil thought, pulsing through the clear clean air of the meadow, touching my mind, then withdrawing.

Here is a story from our own mountains-from the shadows in the mountains where more Things dwell than is suspected down in the towns. The hills are old-older than our memories in many ways-which may be one reason why the Folk are to be found down there. We prophesize interesting things for Dorothy Edgerly, who makes a first appearance in the field with this unusual story from the shadows some of us know.

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"It's in the old Higgins' house."

"What is?"

"I don't know, Mellie, but I don't like this. You stay here and I'll go up into the house and see."

"Jeb, be careful! Humans can't hurt you, but that evil...!"

"I'll be careful, honest, Mellie. But I've *got* to find out what it is. I can't leave it now."

She had taken her hands off my arm and was holding them up against her mouth, her eyes fixed on the house. I went across the pasture and up to that old ruin of a house.

It had been a nice enough farmhouse in its time, but it had been deserted and neglected for twenty, thirty years, according to the people in the village. The roof had fallen in, the porch was sagging, the floor boards warped and sprung. I went in through the side door. That is, I went in through a gap in the side. There was no door, just this gaping hole in the wall where the door had been. The room beyond this was the kitchen. There was a broken pump in the sink, one corner of the roof was gone, and in the other side of the room, a black hole yawned where the stairs leading to the cellar used to be.

I stood quietly and opened my mind wide. There is no other way I can describe it. Then I felt it!

Hate! Stark mad hate, welling up from the cellar! It flowed up and washed over me like an angry sea, struggling to possess me. I took a firm hold on myself and hurled the Thought unexpectedly down the stairway.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?"

I asked it suddenly and strongly, hoping to trick whoever was there into answering me just as quickly.

"I am one of the Old Ones."

"Where do you come from?" My blood had turned to ice but I forced myself to go on. No answer. I couldn't raise anything.

At last I went out into the summerlit field to Melisande.

"What is it, Jeb?"

"One of the Old Ones". I took her hand into mine and tried to let its warmth seep into me.

"Oh! Jeb, it can't be. They've been banished! Everyone knows that! Everyone knows they chose to serve Lucifer, and when He fell, they were banished into outer space! You know that. It can't be one of Them!"

"I know, Mellie, it can't be, but it is. He said so himself." I told her the whole story, still holding her hand, still trying to meet the band of coldness around my chest.

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Mellie listened quietly, her green eyes round and shining, her lips pared as if she were running. When I had finished she said slowly:

"Come away, Jeb. It has nothing to do with us. We don't have to come here anymore. It can't hurt us. Let's go away up the mountain again."

"No", I said, "I can't leave now. I know it can't hurt us, but what about the humans in this valley? Honey comes here a lot to visit her aunt. Do you think I could let one of the evil Old Ones hurt my brother's wife?"

"Oh Jeb! It won't hurt Honey if she stays on the mountain. Don't get into trouble. You know the Folk don't like your interfering in human affairs!"

"You want Honey to be hurt?"

"No—oo, but Jeb, you know, you said yourself, she is willing to become an apprentice witch. Walt is a wizard of the third class, so he didn't lose his powers when he married a human. He's safe, he'll take care of Honey."

"Well, I'll see". She was so upset about the whole thing, that I took her up the mountain and let her ride my Eagle. She certainly was wonderful looking, her eyes gleaming as green as the new leaves on the willow in spring, her red hair streaming behind her. She soon forgot the Old One, but I didn't. After I had taken her to the house, where she was staying, I hurried back to my home.

Everything was quiet there. Grandmaw was peacefully rocking with her chair only an inch or two off the floor. Maw's broom was in the corner, Paw and Grandpaw were sitting under the great old oak tree, quietly talking. Walt was there too, asleep in the sun near the door. I took a deep breath and said: "Listen everybody. I got something to tell you".

They just looked at me, but didn't say anything.

Then I let them have it. I told them the whole incredible story. They didn't believe me. They looked at me as if they thought I was crazy. It couldn't be one of the Old Ones! *They* had been banished! Everybody knew that! I had to make them believe me. I talked on, and finally I could tell they half believed me. But...

"Leave it alone, Boy". Granpaw shook his head at me.

"That's Jeb, always looking for trouble! You mind your own business". Grandmaw rocked a little harder, but the chair didn't rise any, so I knew she wasn't taking me seriously.

"Listen!" I tried to get

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over to them my own feeling of fear. "Listen! I tell you that's one of the Old Ones. It's here, on earth! It's evil".

"The Old Ones left Earth long ago, Jeb. You know that. Besides, it can't hurt *you* none. Jest set yourself down and I'll make you a nice mess of stew". Maw patted my head as if I were a child.

I made one more try.

"I know it can't hurt me. It's the humans I'm afraid for. It's in the old Higgins house, right on the Highway. You see what that means! It'll get out and go anywhere it wants to!"

"Jeb, you let it alone. Only the Coven has the right to interfere, and they won't. We *musn't* interfere in human events. We musn't do *anything* to change their life pattern!"

"But Paw....."

"That's all, Jeb. You leave it alone. And that's orders!"

I went down the mountain slowly. I hated to go into the town. All those people! Some of them I knew personally, some I didn't. But they were all so defenseless against one of the Old Ones.

I was dragging my heels and thinking hard when someone spoke to me. "Hi, Son. You must be miles away from here by the look of you." It was the Sheriff sitting on a rock under a little patch of trees.

"Yeh!" I said. "I'm thinking about Melisande." That was safe enough. He knew I liked her and he knew we went around together.

His pale blue eyes flickered towards me, then he looked at the pipe he was lighting.

"She stand you up? You look mighty down in the mouth."

"No, she didn't exactly," I said. "I hope to meet her at Honey's aunt's place." That was good enough, Melisande liked to meet Honey.

"Yeh?" I'm going there myself. Leastways, I'm going to the house next door. I'll walk you a ways." He tapped out his pipe on his heel, put it away in his coat pocket and started down the road.

"Next door? That's the Cummins' place, isn't it?" I wanted to take his mind off me. "Anything wrong?"

"Don't know. Have to see when I get there. Miz' Cummins says someone's stealing things out of her icebox."

"You mean food? What about the twins?"

"Yeh, food. Could be the twins. But I cain't for the life of me see why two young 'uns would eat raw meat, especially when they's plenty of cookies handy."

"Raw? Was it always raw?"

"So she says. Miz Cummins is upset. Well, so long, son.

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I think that's your Redhead on Miz' Thorpe's piazza now."

I don't know how Melisande happened to be there, but I was glad.

"So long, Sheriff," I said and went up to Mellie.

Melisande wanted to go for a ride in the jeep. Jim Thorpe always lets me drive it, so we took off. I let it out on the deserted part of the highway, but when we got near Wallacetown, I slowed up. We drove up to a wayside shack, had a couple of cokes, then drove back. There was quite a passel of people at the house when we got to Aunt Sade's place. Honey was there, sitting in the kitchen with her Aunt. Miz' Cummins, the twins, Jonnie and Sue sat opposite. Walt and the Sheriff were leaning up against the wall. Melisande and I came in and Mellie perched on the arm of Honey's chair. I stood behind her.

"What is this, a council of war?" asked Mellie.

"Jest about." The Sheriff was turning his old pipe slowly around in his hands. That meant he was disturbed.

Aunt Sade sighed, then—

"Jonnie, you took that meat. I saw you and Sue go out the back door and you were carrying a bundle. I won't scold". She said earnestly. "Maybe you were hungry. Maybe you wanted a picnic."

"Hungry!" exploded Walt. "Four pounds of hamburgers for two seven year old kids!"

"Walt! Hush!"

"We were carrying Sue's doll." Jonnie's voice was shrill. "I had to fix it. She dropped it and I had to fix it."

"Yeh! It was my doll and Jonnie fixed it".

"I was just thinking," said the Sheriff slowly. "That's a powerful lot of meat for two kids. Leasen you're feeding some dawg with it, that is."

I was facing the twins. They were nice normal Valley children, Jonnie a little taller than Sue, but not much. They looked alike, and like twins, they probably thought alike. When the Sheriff said that about the dog, their eyes glanced towards each other, and I thought Sue turned a little pale.

"No, Aunt Sade, we didn't eat your meat, honest. And we didn't eat the leg of lamb, Mom. Honest, isn't that right, Sue?"

"Honest." Sue's voice wasn't as positive as Jonnie's but she crossed her chest. "Cross my heart, we didn't eat that meat."

I was just going to ask them if they had taken the meat and given it to someone else to eat when Aunt Sade stood up.

"Well, that's that! No fussing over it any longer. The

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meat's gone. Maybe that hired man that's been helping out at the Basset's place took it. Sheriff, you cut over there and ask him."

"Yes, Mam." The Sheriff's voice was so meek I was surprised until he winked at me.

"Well, there'll be no meat loaf tonight. You folks'll have to put up with hominy and bacon. Jeb, you cut down cellar and bring up a side of bacon, and some preserves and some pickles if you want them. Honey, you set the table. Walt, get out of my way. Go set somewhere. Sorry, Annie," to Mrs. Cummins, "sorry I suspected your younguns. It must have been that hired man."

"That's all right," said Mrs. Cummins quietly. "I want to find out where all that meat is going to myself. Come along, children," and the council of war broke up.

Aunt Sade could cook, and the hominy grits, bacon, five kinds of preserves, homemade pickles and bread, not to mention cake and pie, kept me occupied for a long time. I can't say I missed the meatloaf.

Later, when Mellie and I were going up the mountain, she faced me.

"Where *did* all that meat go to, Jeb?" she asked.

"You mean the four pounds of hamburger?" I stalled.

"Yes, that, and the leg of lamb, and some ham from Mrs. Brown's refrigerator. Seems everybody in the village is losing meat."

"Maybe it *is* that hired hand."

"I don't think so. He's working for the Bassets and they set a mighty good table."

"Well, the Sheriff will find out. Come on, Mellie, I'll race you home. And *no levitation!*"

She was off before I had finished and we ran all the way up the mountain. She had forgotten all about the meat by the time we got there, but I hadn't. When I said 'Good night' to her, I went back down into the Valley. It was late by this time, almost eleven o'clock and all the houses were dark. The people of the Valley always went to bed early. I wandered around for a while. I had no plan. I was just disturbed. I found myself outside the Cummins' house. I remembered the glances the twins had exchanged when the Sheriff mentioned the dog. I wondered whether there was a dog.

The air grew night cool. There was no moon and the stars were very far away. I was just going on when the side door of the house creaked. I couldn't see it from where I stood, but almost at once Jonnie and Sue

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came around the corner of the house and started down the road that led out of town. I followed. If it is a dog, I wondered why they hadn't said so. Sue looked back once and I faded quickly. Now I was really upset. I had seen the glitter of tears on her cheeks.

The two sturdy little figures went steadily down the road, past the last house, then, striking across the field, they went towards the Higgins' house.

"Great guns!" I thought. "That's no place for children! It's falling to pieces. They'll get hurt." I started to catch up with the children, when I felt "IT" reach out.

"Meat, meat, good good." The evil greed beat against me. She stopped as if she couldn't go on.

"Come on," said Jonnie, "Let's get it over with."

They went on towards the house slowly, reluctantly. Up the crazy stairs, through the gaping empty doorway, and into the dark kitchen. Jonnie had a flashlight, but the little bulb only lighted a small spot in front of them. The evil was all about me now, and I threw up a shield between me and the Old One. I didn't want him to know I was there.

"Here." Jonnie put the package he was holding on the floor, just at the top of the cellar stairs.

"Throw it down. It's too little, can't you get me more? I'm hungry. I said I'd give you something nice if you fed me. Can't you get me more?"

"That's all we could get, Mr. Old." Sue's voice quivered. "Mama wanted to know where the leg of lamb went to, and Aunt Sade made an awful fuss about this hamburger. When are you going to give us a present?"

"Soon, soon." Slobbering sounds came up the cellar stairs." "But it's so little."

"That's all we could get," repeated Jonnie. "We have to go now, Mr. Old. If Mama wakes up and finds us gone, she'll worry. You said we must keep you a secret, but she might come looking for us and find you."

"Go ahead, then, go on. But bring me more meat tomorrow."

The two children ran off as fast as they could, back to their house and safety, but me, I went up the mountain and sat on Eagle Rock.

THIS WAS bad! Somehow, some way, the Old One had gotten the children into his power. I knew now where all the meat had gone to, and I knew too, that a leg of lamb, four pounds of hamburgers and a ham wouldn't satisfy him long.

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He would need meat to grow, and the more he grew the more meat he would need. Those poor kids! They'd never get out from under the spell he'd put on them.

I tried to tell Paw and Grandpaw again, but they wouldn't have anything to do with it. What's more, they forbade *me* to do anything!

"Let it alone, Jeb. It's nothing to you. The Old One cain't hurt you, and you *know* we're not allowed to change anything for the Humans."

It was all very well for them to tell me that. I knew all that. But they were safe on top of Old Baldy and I was haunting the village. It was I who watched the people get more jittery every day, because more meat was disappearing out of iceboxes. I was the one who watched the twins and saw them get slyer and more deceitful every day. They were getting thinner too, and Sue looked like a little ghost of herself. Aunt Annie put it down to the fact that everyone was upset, but I knew. The Old One was d r a i n i n g their strength. He would hold off as long as they supplied him with meat, but when that stopped.....I gritted my teeth in frustration. I was one flame of hatred for the Old One. I wasn't allowed to stop him. I couldn't even go near him. The Law of the Folk said that we Warlocks were not to—*Blast* the Law of the Folk!

Things stayed that way for a few days, and then the gossip changed. Not only meat was disappearing, but chickens. I could have wept. He was getting stronger! Then one night the City Pound was broken into and four stray dogs had gone. They were never seen again. Pet cats were missed, canaries, parakeets, gone during the night and never recovered. I was just about frantic by now, but I was bound by the Law of the Folk and could do nothing.

The Sheriff was having a rough time. People demanded that he find the thief and fast. He took to patrolling the roads at night, but he didn't see two little children flitting from shadow to shadow. He was looking for larger game. The hired man, Bert Jones was questioned time and time again. He was in the c l e a r, the Bassetts gave him an airtight alibi each time. He slept in the room with young Bassett and never left it all night.

This went on for a few more days, then Joe Bassett came in to the Sheriff's office. The hired hand, Bert Jones, had disappeared. The story went that Jones had gone down to the 10 acre lot to cut wood one morning, and never came back. When he

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skipped both noontime dinner *and* supper, Joe thought he might have been invited to friends, but when he didn't come in all night, the Bassetts were upset. The first thing the next day, Joe went down to the 10 acre lot. There was a new pile of logs, there was one log with the fresh marks of the axe in it, but no Bert. The Bassetts looked through the woods, and started across the fields. They went into the old Higgins' house and there, in the middle of the kitchen was the axe. They peered down the cellar but there was no one there. Then they reported it to the Sheriff.

I was there when they told their story, and for a moment the earth spun out from under me. I knew where Bert had gone and I knew what I had to do! *I CALLED A COVEN!*

I was the first to reach the meeting place on Scarface that night. I hovered over a ledge of rock and watched the Folk assemble. I wanted to gage their reactions to the idea of *me* calling a Coven. The older folk were disapproving, the younger ones either were awed at or secretly admiring my audacity.

The night was far advanced before all the Elders had taken their seats. The moon was low on the horizon, making the shadows long and black. The fire, started earlier by the young ones, had been allowed to sink into a bed of red coals, barely kept alive by an occasional log. The Elders sat in a semicircle facing it, all except Old Walters. He felt chilly, he said, so he was hovering over the dying fire.

"Who calls the Coven?" asked the young Wizard from Clearwater that Paw doesn't like. He uses new fangled spells, I hear.

"I do, Jeb Enders of Bald mountain."

"Stand forth, Jeb Enders, and state why you call us. You are not an Elder, it is not right for you to call a Coven!" His black eyes shone red in the firelight.

"I know I am not an Elder, but my business is serious. One of the Old Ones is on the Earth!"

A murmur swept through the Folk like the wind through the trees.

"What is that to us? The Old Ones are powerless to hurt us."

"But they can hurt the Humans in the Valley. It's in the cellar of the old Higgins' house. It has hold of two children and is making them bring it meat!"

"I still say that has nothing to do with us." It was a Wizard from Covington who spoke now, slowly and seriously. What the humans do is up to them. This is a human problem. We musn't do

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anything to change their pattern."

"Listen to me", I said. "I'll tell you the whole story, just as I have been watching it happen. You'll see how serious it is. Melisande knows, she felt him first."

"You, Jeb Enders!" Old man Walters broke in. "You're always looking for trouble. Always getting mixed in Human affairs! Some day you'll get your 'Come Uppance' and I hope I'll be around to see it!"

"All right, all right." I was desperate. "Maybe I *do* seem to get in trouble. Maybe I do mix with the Humans more than the rest of you! But I tell you I'm right this time. We have to send that Old One back! The more he devours, the stronger he'll become!"

That started something, all right.

The people in the valley must have thought that a storm was coming up, the noise was so loud. At last the Elders were able to bring quiet out of all that uproar, and the young Wizard could make himself heard. I never did understand why *he* had to talk so much.

"We must *NOT* interfere. You of the Folk know we must not interfere. And to use our powers to send the Old One back across space would be to break our own Laws."

"But this is a desperate case," I pleaded, "and we surely could use a desperate cure! Let me tell you the whole story."

"I think we *ought* to hear the whole story. Let Jeb talk."

I turned gratefully to the Dryad. "Jeb mentioned my daughter Melisande", she went on quietly, "I think it only right to know where she comes in."

"Yes, let me tell you the whole story." I pleaded, not to the Elders, but the Folk sitting around.

"Look out for him. That Jeb always could talk. He could talk his way into a church!" quavered old man Walters.

"Let him tell it." The Folk were interested, and the Elders gave way to them.

I took a deep breath and began. I started with the thefts of meat, the stolen chickens, the lost house pets, and lastly, the disappearance of the hired man. That last caused a stir among the Folk, but they still didn't call out "Send the Old One back."

I looked at Mellie. "Tell them about the children."

She leaned forward earnestly, her red hair gleaming in the firelight, her green eyes glowing. Maybe I didn't move them with my story, but Mellie did. She made those children live. By the time she got through some of the women had tears in their eyes,

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while hugging their own youngsters close.

"Let's help the children," begged one.

"We could help just the children," said another.

But it was no use. The Elders talked together, voted, nodded to each other, then the young Wizard stood up.

"Jeb Enders, hear the decision of the Coven. You are to do nothing to make the Old One go back across Space. Neither by spell nor by incantation will you influence his future. This is a Human problem, let the Humans handle it. You are forbidden to do anything yourself."

"But....." I began.

He interrupted. "Jeb Enders, you have heard the will of the Folk. Furthermore you are forbidden to tell this story to the Humans. They would not believe you, and they might ask you where you got your knowledge. The case is closed. You may *not* send the Old One back!"

I knew there was no appeal from the decision of the Council, but I had one more idea. The Wizard had said it was a human problem, and the Humans would have to handle it themselves. I turned to Walt.

"Walt," I said, "Maybe..."

"Oh! no, you don't, Jeb Enders! I know what you are going to say. You keep Honey out of this. Don't you dare let my wife get mixed up in this. And just to see that you don't pull any tricks, I'm taking her to Covington tomorrow to visit her kin folk. And what's more, I'm starting home right now." And he took off, in such a hurry he was up, high in the air, within seconds.

The young ones had started the Dance of Friendship by now. I had no heart to dance, and wasn't feeling any too friendly towards the Folks. I started to follow Walt when a soft hand slipped into mine.

"Please, Jeb, don't break the Circle," the Dryad whispered beside me. "I know we didn't back you up, but you mustn't break the Circle".

"I don't feel like dancing. This thing is too serious, too dreadful. I can't dance."

"Not dance the Friendship dance! Oh! Jeb, please!" Mellie's voice was almost as soft as her mother's.

"Jeb, dance it with me?"

"But Lady Gowrie..." The Dryad's hands were soft, but they were strong too, so I let her pull me towards the dance.

"A circle is strong," she said. "We need the Circle, we need its strength."

We finished the Dance of Friendship, but in spite of the pleading of the others, I wouldn't stay for any more dances. A little idea tugged at my brain. I wanted to go home and take it out and look

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at it. It had no form, it just tickled the edge of my consciousness. I got home as quick as I could and stretched out under the oak tree. The valley lay below me, beautiful in the fresh morning light, that quiet valley with its little white houses and its humans living there.

My own family came home, but they didn't come over to me. They knew I had to work things out for myself. At last I did work things out. I had a scheme, a chancy scheme, its success depending on two little children, but at least I could try.

That afternoon, I went down to the village, borrowed some paper and a pencil from Aunt Sade, and went looking for the children. I found them with their Mother, huddled in a miserable group on the side porch of their house. Sue's eyes were red and swollen from crying and Jonnie's face was set and pale.

"I declare I don't know what's gotten into that child." Mrs. Cummin's voice was sharp, but the arm she put around Sue's shoulders was gentle. "Sue, you never took on about a cat like this before! You know Tommy Black was 14 years old. He had to die sometime. He's in cat heaven now, and I want you stop crying." She gave the little girl a shake, smoothed back her hair and wiped away the tears with her apron.

"What happened?" asked Mellie, coming up quietly. I grinned at her but she was intent on the children.

"Her old black cat has disappeared. You'd think it was some of her kin the way she's taking on. And Jonnie is almost as bad. As I tell her, 14 years is a long time for a cat to live. Go on now. Go play. I got more to do than listen to this nonsense."

She gave Sue a quick kiss and went back into the house.

"Come on kids," I said, "let's go down to the river. I saw a big old catfish hiding there the other day. Let's see if we can catch it".

Melisande is always quick to follow my lead. She caught Sue's hand and pulled her along.

"Bet we beat you to the river," she called, and ran off. Jonnie and I ran after them, and for the rest of the afternoon the children forgot their troubles. Mellie and they played in the river, I sat on the bank and wrote. When I had finished I called them.

"Come here, kids, I've got a new song for you. You sing it to the tune of "Farmer in the Dell."

They crowded around me and I hummed the tune.

"Go on, sing the words."

Their shrill child voices sounded thin in the open air as they sang the new words.

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"Jeb!" breathed Mellie. "You can't do this, you can't. Neither spell nor incantation! You heard them. You can't do this."

"I'm not doing anything," I said airily. "The children are doing it. Listen Sue, Jonnie. You hate Mr. Old, don't you?"

The twins shrank towards each other and glared at me in terror, too startled to speak.

"Oh, it's all right. I know all about Mr. Old. I've been to visit him. He's in the cellar of the old Higgins house. I've talked to him."

"Did you?" quavered Jonnie. "Did you give him anything?"

"Not me," I declared. "I wouldn't give him anything. I don't like him. *I* wouldn't give him any meat! I wouldn't give him a thing." I looked at them quietly. They hung their heads and Sue started to cry again.

"Look," I said, "you kids can't go on getting him meat any more. It's too hard. He's bad. You know that. He doesn't deserve to be fed. Don't you wish he would be away.?"

"Yes", sobbed Sue "I don't care if he ever gives us a present. I don't like him, I'm afraid of him!"

"He won't ever give you a present!" I declared loudly. "He just said that to get you to feed him. He promised you long ago, didn't he?" I was just guessing, but I could tell from their faces that I was right. "You notice, though, he hasn't given you anything yet. And he's not going to give you anything. He's a mean, nasty bad old thing, and you ought to tell him to go away!"

"He is a nasty, bad old thing, he is". Jonnie caught Sue's hand in his, "but we've got to go to him, he makes us."

It was a relief to them to talk about it, but they were still afraid. Mellie hugged Sue.

"You do what Jeb says," she told them. "Jeb's very smart; if anyone can make Mr. Old go away, he can. And I hope he can keep out of trouble," she added in a low voice.

"No, you're wrong there, Mellie. *They* can make him go away. You kids met him first, and you and Mellie and I are the only ones who know about him. *You* tell him to go away. Listen, you're going to go to him tonight." I didn't ask them, I pretended that I knew. They nodded miserably.

"Well, this is what we'll do. You learn these new words to that song, you know, The Farmer in the Dell. You learn them good, mind you, so you can sing them in the dark. Then, when you come out tonight, we'll be there and go with you. All right?"

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"He said we were never to tell anyone, or something dreadful would happen."

"You didn't tell us, we knew. Why I even talked to him."

"Well, all right".

"Now you go along and learn the new words and we'll meet you".

They hesitated a moment, then their Mother called them to supper. Mellie and I went away before they could protest anymore, Mellie grumbling as we crossed the field, "I hope you know what you're doing." She sounded mighty doubtful.

There was no moon that night as Mellie and I waited for the children. She had spent the time trying to persuade me not to do this, because the Folk had forbidden it, but, as I kept pointing out to her, I wasn't going to do anything, the children were.

After the bell on the Courthouse clock had struck midnight, I was just beginning to worry about the children. They hadn't come. I worried. If they didn't come.... Then the side door of the Cummins' house creaked, and the children came out and started down the road. I took the bundle that Jonnie was carrying, out of his hands, and threw it over a wall.

"No, sir," I said, disregarding their protests. "No sir, we're not going to feed that bad Mr. Old again. We're going to tell him to go away."

"He'll hurt us," quavered Sue.

"Not while I'm with you," I declared. "He's afraid of me. He won't dare touch you as long as I am there."

"All right". They were still doubtful, but they came along quietly.

The old Higgins' house was a shapeless black blot when we reached it, and we all had to be careful of broken floor boards and fallen beams. At last we stood in the ruined kitchen, the black mouth of the cellar stairs, blacker than the darkness of the room. Then slyly, evilly, I felt the questing thrusts of thoughts probing the room.

"Take hands," I whispered, "Sue, take my hand, Jonnie, take Mellie's. We're going to make a circle." I put my lips close to Mellie's ear. "Mellie, don't you dare make a sound. Don't sing, don't say anything!" I leaned over the two children, whispering, "You children are going to sing. Come on, round to the right. You know the words...The Farmer in the Dell".

The twins' voices were weak and uncertain.

"The farmer in the dell,
The farmer in the dell,
Heigh-ho the cherry o,
The farmer in the dell."

I could feel the uncertainty in the thoughts now. There was a question. *IT* tried to interrupt the children, but

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the familiar words gave them a little feeling of confidence and their voices grew stronger. They repeated the little rhyme.

"Now the new words," I whispered. I could feel the hate welling up the stairs. The children started again.

You've got to go away,
You've got to go away,
Heigh-ho the cherry o
You've got to go away,

"Good, good", I whispered, "Go on." I nodded my head in time.

You've got to go away."
You've got to go away."
Go back where you came from,
You've got to go away".

The hate was like a living stream. It filled the room and pressed against us. The twins faltered and tried to loosen their hands. I held onto them tighter, and went faster, drawing them around the circle after me.

"Go on," I whispered, "he's going!"

They were singing, louder and louder.....

"You've got to leave this earth!
"You've got to leave this earth!
Go back into space again!
"You've got to leave this earth!"

Wave after wave of hate hit us. It was like wading against a current of a stream. The twins faltered, stopped. They were gasping now, as if they couldn't breathe. Sue struggled to loosen her hand from mine.

"Don't stop now, Sue, don't stop! You've got him licked. He's afraid of you! Feel it? He's afraid of you. Tell him to go away."

Sue gasped and sobbed but she couldn't sing anymore. Jonnie's fact was set and white, as he struggled for breath.

"Sue, Jonnie".... I whispered.... "You hate him! You want him to go away! Sue, remember what he made you do? Remember Tommy?"

Sue's head snapped up and, slipping her hand away from mine at last, she ran over to the stairwell.

"You get out of here, you nasty old thing. You get out! You made me give you my nice Tommy Black! I don't care if he was old, I loved him, and you made me give him to you! You go away, you're bad, bad, bad!" She stamped her foot in anger.

Jonnie ran over to her.

"She's right!" he screamed, "He did take our cat. You're bad. You get out of here. Get out! Get out! We hate you. You go away. Get out of here! Go away!"

The blanket of hate welled up; at us, strong, compelling, then slowly, reluctantly, it retreated. It flowed back down the stairs, then as I waited, it hesitated.

"He's going!" I shouted. "Sue, Jonnie! You are win-

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ning! Sing, sing! Sing the last verse again!"

The children shouted the words again, standing there at the top of the cellar stairs. Mellie's eyes shone in the darkness like a cat's but the children didn't notice. They were intent on the song.

"You've got to leave this earth,
You've got to leave this earth,
Go back into space again,
You've got to leave this earth".

Suddenly, they stopped. The hate was gone, the pressure was gone, the Old One was gone. We knew it, all of us. There wasn't anyone in the cellar anymore.

"Come on home, children," I said, and took Sue up into my arms. "Come on, Mellie, we'll take the twins home."

We went slowly, tiredly, out and down the lane. When we reached the road to the village, I stopped and put Sue down.

"Mellie, rest here for me." I said. "I forgot something."

"Now, Jeb, let well enough alone. Don't get into any trouble, any more trouble I mean!" she begged.

"I'm all right. Just stay here till I come back."

I went back to the black glob of the old house. The Old One was gone. I probed in all dimensions, but he was gone. I looked out of the broken window. There was no moon, but the stars were clear and bright. I turned up the edge of my jacket and tore a hole in the pocket. Then I put my crystal in it and waited for it to fall out of the hole. I looked at it as it lay on a little pile of dry leaves and rotten wood. The rays of the stars seemed to concentrate inside it and hang suspended there.

"Good old Betelgeuse!" I whispered, looking at it shining in the night sky. "Funny, you sent your rays down here to earth millions of years ago, just for this. Go to it now, do your stuff!" and I went out leaving the crystal on the floor.

Mellie carried a silent, exhausted Sue and I carried an equally quiet Jonnie. I looked all around me and caught the feel of the wind, caught the motion of the stars, the slow swing of the earth, and spoke softly in the rhythm of the night.

"You're going to sleep. You'll sleep all night. When you wake in the morning this whole thing will seem like a dream. A nasty dream, that you won't want to remember or talk about. You won't remember Mr. Old again, ever a g a i n. Sleep, sleep."

Minutes later we were at the house and, softly—very softly—opening the upstairs window, we put the twins to bed and then came out again into the night.

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"Let's go for a ride". I said.

"Jeb, you did wrong. You were told not to change the human pattern, and you did".

"No, I didn't. I did nothing I just taught some children new words to one of their own songs. *They* did it. They changed the pattern. And that was all right, because they are human. *I* never told him to go away, and neither did you".

"Oh Jeb. I don't know...." She was still unconvinced but we had reached Observation Point by now and she looked at questioning as I parked at the edge. The valley spread below us, the houses dark, only an occasional headlight showing on the deserted highway. I watched the sky to my left. Slowly a little glow gathered, then a questioning finger of flame showed over the trees. At last, one long strong fist of flame reached up into the sky. Lights began to spring to lite in the darkened valley houses. We could hear the clang-clang of the fire engine way up here on the Point.

"Come on" I shifted gears. "Let's go to Wallaceville."

"Jeb! Did you set fire to the house?" Melisande is too darn smart sometimes.

"Nonsense! I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't set that place on fire." I saw no reason to tell her I wasn't responsible for the laws of the stars, as we drove off, in the opposite direction, as fast as the jeep could go.

I was feeling good—real good. I—personally—hadn't, after all, interfered. The youngsters had sung that song. All I'd done, maybe, was to sort of clean up after it was all over, just in case others of the Old Ones had any ideas about the old Higgins house....And suddenly I stopped! Gosh! Golly! I'd better get hold of the crystal as soon as the house cooled a bit! I like the sheriff and I have a feeling he likes me, as he likes any of us who live, all by ourselves, up on the mountain. But I'd better wach my step! If I ever do get that "comeuppance" Old Man Walters is always wishing for, I have an uneasy feeling that it is the sheriff who will be the one to give it to me, and maybe he'd guess what the crystal meant.....

THE BLACK MASS WAS OFTEN PERFORMED AT IMPORTANT COVENS.

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invasion

by...HARLAN ELLISON

His head was cradled in Alberts' lap. His left side had been scorched..... Overhead, the sinister discs waited...

IT WASN'T just one sighting, or a covey, or a hundred. It was five thousand. Exactly five thousand of them, and all at the same time. They appeared in the skies over Earth instantaneously.

One instant the sky was empty and grey and flecked with cloud formations...the next they blotted out the clouds, and cast huge elliptical shadows along the ground.

They were miles in diameter, and perfectly round, and there was no questioning —even for an incredulous second—that they were from outer space somewhere. They hung a mile above the Earth, over the 30th parallel. Over Los Angeles and the Sahara Desert and Baghdad and the Canary Islands and over Shanghai. There was no great empty space left between them, for they girdled the Earth with a band of discs, side by side... Where everyone could see them so no one could doubt their power or their menace.

Yet they hung silently. As though waiting.

Waiting.

Harlan Ellison, returns to those pages with this challenging story of what can happen if and when we attack the UFO. Mr. Ellison, one of the more interesting and more prolific of the younger writers in this field, may very well make you wonder...Could this happen?

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"The damned thing about it, General, is that every once in a while, one of them just goes *flick!* and disappears. In a little while another one *flicks!* and takes its place. Not the same one, either. We can tell. There are different markings on them. Damned if *I* can figure it out."

The short dapper Captain, with hair thinning across his skull, hands folded across his paunch, finished his speech, and settled back in the chair.

He stared across the desk at the General. The General steepled his blocky fingers, rocked back and forth in the big leather chair. He stared back at his Adjutant with a veiled expression.

"How long—to the hour—have they been here now, Captain?" His tone was almost chiding, definitely aggressive.

He waited silently for an answer as the Adjutant leafed through a folder, consulted his watch, and closed his eyes in figuring. Finally the Adjutant leaned forward and said, "Three days, eight and one-half hours, General."

"And nothing has been done about them yet." The heavyfaced Air Force man replied. It was not a question; it was a statement, and one that demanded either an explanation or an alibi.

The Adjutant knew he had no explanation, so he offered the alibi. "But, General, what can we do? We don't dare scramble a flight of interceptors. Those things are almost four miles around, and there's no telling what they'd do if we made a hostile move ...or even a move that *looked* hostile.

"We don't know where they come from or what they want. Or what's inside them. But if they were smart enough to *get* here, they're surely smart enough to stop any offensive action we might take. We're stuck, General. Our hands are tied."

The General leaned forward, and his sharp blue eyes caught the Adjutant's face in a vise-lock stare. "Captain, don't you *ever* use that word around me. The first thing I learned, when I was a plebe at the Point, was that the hands of the United States Air Force are *never* tied. You understand that?"

The Captain shifted uneasily, made an accepting motion with his hand, "Yes, but General...what..."

"I said *never*, Captain Alberts! And by that I mean you'd better get out there and do something, right now."

The Adjutant rose hastily to his feet, slid the chair back an inch, and saluted briskly. Turning on his heel, he left the office, a frozen frown on his face. For the first time since he'd gotten this cushy job with the General, it looked as though there was going to be work

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involved. Worse, it might be danger.

Captain Harold Alberts, Adjutant, was terribly frightened, for the first time since he'd been appointed to the General's staff.

The saucers seemed to be holding a tight formation. They hovered, and lowered not an inch. They were separated by a half mile of empty space on either side, but were easily close enough to pick off anyone flying between them...should that be their intent.

They were huge things, without conning bubbles or landing gear, without any visible projections of any sort. Their skins were of some non-reflective metal, for it could be seen that the sun was glinting on them, yet was casting off no burst of radiance. It made the possibility that this was some super-strong metal, seem even more possible. They were silent behemoths, around which the air lanes of the world had had to be shifted. They did not move, nor did they show evidence of life. They were like empty cars, parked in silent rows.

They were simply *there*, and what sort of contesting could there be to that?

Every few hours, at irregular intervals (with no pattern that could be clocked or computed) one of the ships would disappear. Over the wasted sands of the Sahara, or above the crowded streets of Shanghai, or high over the neon of Las Vegas, one of the ships would waver for an instant, as though being washed by some invisible wave, then *flick!* and it would be gone. And in that moment the sun would stream through, covering the area that had been shadowed by the elliptical darkness. Shortly thereafter—but only sometimes shortly, occasionally a full hour or two would elapse—another ship would appear in the vanished one's spot. It would not be the same ship, because the one that had disappeared might have been ringed with blue lines, while this new one had a large green dot as its top-center.

But there it was, right in place, a half mile away from each neighbor on either side, and casting that fearful shadow along the ground.

Storm clouds formed above them, and spilled their contents down. The rain washed across their smooth, metallic tops, and ran off, to soak the ground a mile beneath.

They made no move, and they offered no hostility, but —as the hardware dealer in San Francisco said—"My God, the things could *blast* us at any second!" And—as the Berber tribesman, talking to his dromedary-mounted fellows, said—"Even if they just hang silent, they come

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from *somewhere*, and, Allah protect us, I am frightened, terribly frightened."

So it went, for a week, with the terror c l o g g i n g the throats of Earthmen around the world. This was not some disaster that happened in Mississippi, so the people of Connecticut could read about it and shake their heads, then worry no more. This was s o m e t h i n g that affected everyone, and a great segment of the Earth's population *lived* under those sleek metal vehicles from some far star.

This was terror incarnate. Getting worse with each passing day.

The Adjutant felt his vague distaste for this pompous ass of a General growing rapidly. He had worked as the General's aid for three years now, and been quite happy with the assignment. The General was an important man, and it was therefore surprising how few actual top-rung decisions had to be made by him, without first being checked and double-checked by underlings.

The Captain knew his General thought he was a pride-and-joy. Certainly he did; the Adjutant made most of the decisions; the g e n e r a l handed out the orders. The Adjutant had naturally become indispensible.

But this crisis with the saucers was something else. It had been dumped in the General's lap, both from above, and from below, and he was sweating. He had to solve this problem, and for the first time in his life his rough-hewn good looks and military bearing and good name could not bluff him through.

He actually had to make a meaningful decision, and he was almost incapable of doing it. This made him edgy, snappish, and dissatisfied, and it made the Adjutant's job not quite so pleasant.

"C o n f o u n d it, Alberts! This isn't some base maneuver you can s t a m m e r through! This is a nation-wide emergency, and everyone is on my neck! God knows I'm doing all I can, but I need a little help! I've tried to impress upon you the—the—*seriousness* of the matter; this thing has got to be ended. It's got the world in an uproar. Goddam it, Alberts..."

The man was a wealthy, sheltered, and vacillating individual, and the Adjutant had been making most of his decisions for three years. Alberts wondered what would happen when the rotation plan moved him to another job, next year. Would the new Adjutant catch on as fast as he had from the last one?

Or would the General pull strings so he could stay on?

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But that was all in the future, and this saucer decision was one the General had to make for himself. It wasn't minor.

"Now get up there and *do* s o m e t h i n g!" the General cried, slamming the empty desk-top.

His face was blotched with frustration and annoyance, and—naturally—Alberts saluted, swiveled and left.

One saucer was a dirty affair. Not with the dust and filth of an atmosphere, for the saucer had obviously not been very long in air, but with the pocks and blazes of space. Here a small cluster of pits, where the saucer had encountered a meteor swarm; there a bright smear of oxidized metal. Its makings were slovenly, and there were obvious patchings on its metal hull.

Somehow, it seemed out of place among all the bright, shining, marvelously-intricate painted saucers. It seemed to be a rather poor relation, and never, *never* flicked out of existence. All the others might be subject to that strange disappearing act, but the poor relation. It stayed stayed where it was, somewhere above the Fairchild Desert of Nevada.

Once a civilian pilot from Las Vegas, disregarding the orders of the C.A.P., flew very close to the dirty saucer. The pilot buzzed the ship several times, swooping in and over and back around in huge, swinging arcs. By the time he had made his fourteenth Immelman and decided to land atop the saucer, just for yuks, the hurry-up bleep was out to interceptors based near Reno and Winnemucca, and they caught him high, blasting him from the sky in a matter of minutes.

With the fate of the world hanging in balance, there could be no time for subtlety or reasoning with crackpots. He had been irrational, had defied the stay-grounded, keep-back orders, and so had fallen under the martial law which had ruled the country since the day after the five thousand had appeared.

Radio communication with the ships was impossibly fruitless.

Television transmission was equally worthless.

Bounced signals failed to come back; the metal of the ships sopped them up.

T e l e m e t e r i n g deviced brought back readings of the density—or *seeming* density—of the ships, and when they were reported, the situation looked bleaker than before.

The metal was i n d e e d, super-strong.

The only time t h i n g s looked promising were when a philologist and a linguist were recruited to broadcast a complete course in English

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for thirty-six hours straight. The beam was directed at first one ship, then another, and finally, when it was directed at the dirty saucer, was gulped in.

They continued broadcasting, till at the end of thirty-six hours, the dumpy, red-faced, runny-nosed and sniffling linguist, who had picked up his cold in the broadcasting shack, pushed back his chair, gathered his cashmere sweater from where it had fallen in the corner, and said there was no use.

No reply had come in. If the beings who had flown those saucers were intelligent enough to have gotten here, they would surely have been intelligent enough to have learned English by then. But there had been no reply, and spirits sank again.

Inter-channel memos slipped frantically down from President to Aide, to Secretary of Defense, to Undersecretary, to Chief of Staff, to the General, who passed the memos—bundled to his Adjutant. Who worried.

It had been the only one where there was any slightest sign of contact. "Look, pilot, I want you to fly across that dirty one," the Adjutant said.

"Begging the Captain's permission..." the wide-eyed young pilot demanded, over his shoulder; he continued at the nod from Alberts.

"...but the last man who buzzed that big-O, sir, got himself scissored good and proper. What I mean, sir, is that we're way off bounds, and if our clearances didn't, uh, clear, we might have a flock of my buddies down our necks." He spoke in a faint Texas drawl that seemed to ease from between his thin lips.

The Adjutant felt the adrenalin flowing erratically. He had been taking slop from the General for three weeks, and now to be forced into flying up himself, into the very jaws of death (as he phrased it to himself), to look over the situation...he would brook no backtalk from a whey-faced flight boy fresh out of Floyd Bennett.

Alberts shooed him off, directed him back to the stick. "Don't worry yourself, pilot."

He licked his lips, added, "They cleared, and all we have to worry about is that saucer line up ahead."

The discs were rising out of the late evening Nevada haze. The clouds seemed to have lowered, and the fog seemed to have risen, and the two intermingled, giving a wavering, indistinct appearance to the metallic line of saucers, stretching off beyond the horizon. The Adjutant looked out through the curving bubble of the helicopter's control country, and felt twinges of fear rippling the hair along his neck. The

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Sikorsky copter windmilled in toward the saucer, its rotors *flip-flap-flap-flapping* overhead.

The pilot sticked-in on the dirty saucer. It rose out of the mist abruptly, and they were close enough to see that there really *was* dust streaked with dirt along the dull metal surface of the ship. *Probably from one of these Nevada windstorms,* the Adjutant thought.

They scaled down, and came to a hovering stop two feet above the empty metal face of the disc.

"See anything?" the Adjutant asked.

The pilot craned off to one side, swept his gaze around, then turned on the search-beam. The pole of light watered across the sleek saucer bulk, and picked up nothing. Not even a line of rivets, not even a break in the construction. Nothing but dirt and pock marks, and what might be considered patches, were this a tire or an ordinary ship.

"Nothing, sir."

"Take us over there, right there, will you, pilot?"

The Adjutant indicated a lighter place on the metal of the ship. It seemed to be a different shade of chrome-color. The Sikorsky jerked, lifted a few inches, and slid over. The pilot brought it back down, and they looked over the hull of the saucer at that point.

It was, indeed, lighter in shade.

"This *could* be something, pi—"

The shaft rose up directly in front of the Sikorsky before he could finish the word.

It was a column of transparent, almost glass-like material, with a metal disc sealing off the top. It was rising out of the metal where there had been no break in the skin, and it kept rising till it lowered over them.

"M-m-m-" the Adjutant struggled to get the word loose.

"Move!" he finally spat out, but before they could whip away, the *person* stepped up inside the column, stared straight out, his gigantic face on a line with their cab.

He must have been thirty feet tall, and completely covered with reddish-brown hair. His ears were pointed, and set almost atop his head. The eyes were pocketed by deep ridges of matted hair, and his nose was a pair of breather-slits. His hands hung far below his indrawn waist, and they were eight-fingered. He wore a loose-fitting and wrinkled, dirty toga affair, patched and covered with stains.

He stared at them unblinking. For he had no eyelids.

"Jeezus Gawd Amighty!" the pilot squawked, and fumbled blindly at his controls for an instant, unable to tear his eyes from the being

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before them. Finally his hand met the controls and the Sikorsky bucked backward, tipped, and rose r a p i d l y above the saucer, spiraling away into the night as fast as the rotors would windmill. In a minute the copter was gone.

The glassite pillar atop the dirty saucer remained raised for a few minutes, then slowly sank back into the ship.

No mark was left where it had risen out.

Somehow, news of the *person* leaked out. And from then on, telescopes across the world were trained on the unbroken band of discs circling the Earth. They watched in shifts, not wanting to miss a thing, but there was nothing more to see. No further contact was made, in person or by radio.

There was no sign of life anywhere along the chain of discs. They could have been empty for all anyone knew. Going into the eighth week, no one knew any more about them than on the day they had arrived.

They were not hostile, and that was what kept the world moving, but they were *alien*, they were from the *stars!* And that made them objects of terror.

Tempers were short; memos had long since been replaced by curses and demands. Allegations were thrown back and forth across the oceans. Dereliction of duty proceedings were begun on dozens of persons in high places.

The situation was worsening every moment. In the tenth week the nasty remarks ceased, and there were rumors of a court-martial. And a firing squad.

"Got to *do* something, Alberts. Got to do something!"

"But what, General?"

"I—I want to go up there ...see what he looks like... see what I can d-do..."

An hour later the Sikorsky carried the General to the Maginot line of silent saucers.

Twenty minutes later he was back, bathed in sweat, and white as a fish-belly. "Horrible. All hair and eyes. Horrible.. H o r r i b l e." He croaked a few more words, and sank into a chair.

"Call Ordnance," he breathed gaspingly. Prepare a missle.

"With an atomic warhead?"

"Yes. Now!"

They attached the parasite missile beneath a night-fighter, checking and double-checking the release mechanism.

Then they waited. This wasn't just a test flight. Whatever the repercussions, they wanted them on the General's head, not their own.

In the base office, the Adjutant was replacing the phone in its cradle. "What

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did Washington say, General?" he asked the trembling officer.

"They said the situation was in my hands. I was free to do as I saw fit. The President can't be located. They think he's been smuggled with his cabinet, out West somewhere, to the mountains."

The General did not look at his Adjutant as he spoke the words. He stared at his clasped and shaking hands.

"Tell them to release the missile. We'll watch it on TV."

The Adjutant lifted the phone, clicked the connection buttons twice, spoke quickly, softly, into the mouthpiece. "Let it go."

A minute and a half later, from half a mile away on the launching strip, they heard the jet revv-up and split the evening sky with its fire.

Then they went to the television room and watched the lines of screens.

In one they saw the silent girdle of saucers. In another they were focused on the dirty saucer, with a sign above the screen that said INITIAL TARGET. In a third they had a line-of-sight to the night-fighter's approach pattern.

"There it comes!" one of the technicians yelled, pointing at the lighter dark of the jet as it streaked toward the massed saucers, leaving a trail of fire behind it. They watched silently as the plane swooped in high, dove, and they saw the parasite leave his belly, streak on forward. The jet sliced upward, did a roll, and was a mile away as the parasite homed in exactly.

They watched with held breath as the small atomic missile deaded-in on the dirty saucer, and they flinched as it struck.

A blinding flash covered all the screens for a moment, and a few seconds later they heard the explosion. Shock waves ripped outward and the concussion was great enough to knock out eighteen of the thirty telemetering cameras.

But they could see the dirty saucer clearly on one. In that one the smoke and blast were clearing slowly. A mushroomshaped cloud was rising, rising, rising from the sloping dish of the saucer's upper side. As it moved away they could see oxidized smears and blast pattern of white jagged sunbursts. It looked as harmlesss as a kid's experiment with a match, potassium nitrate and powdered magnesium. It had not harmed the saucer in the least. But....

There was a crack along the top face of the saucer. And from that gash spilled a bubbling white substance. The stuff frothed out and ran across the top of the saucer. It pitted and tore at

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the metal of the ship where ever it touched. There was a weird sound of clacking and coughing from the ship, as though some intricate mechanism within were erupting.

Then, as they watched, the glassite pillar rose up out of the ship...and the person was within.

Unmistakable, clearly, this was rage and hatred. His fists beat against the glassite, and he roared—silently, for no sound could be picked up by the audio ears—inside the pillar. He spat, and blood—red and thick—dotted the clear glassite. His mouth opened screaming wide and long, sharp teeth could be seen.

He shook a fist at the emptiness beyond the saucer, and the pillar lowered into the ship.

A minute later, for the first time since it had arrived, the dirty saucer *flicked!* out of existence and was gone.

"That was perhaps the wrong move, General..." the Adjutant made a tentative remark.

The General, who had been fastened to the TV screen by some invisible linkage, tore his eyes away from the set, and whirled, glowering, on his Adjutant.

"That's for *me* to worry about, Captain Alberts. I told you the military mind can solve problems by the direct method, the uncomplicated method, while these scientists dawdle and doodle helplessly."

He was speaking loudly, almost hysterically.

Albert recognized relief in the officer's tones.

"They're on the run!" the General shouted, grinning hugely. "On the run, by George! Now, come on, let's get a few anti-aircraft battalions out there on the desert and pick off the rest of them in this area."

They were out on the desert, the ack-ack guns sniffing at the sky, pelting the saucers from six separate batteries. They were intent on what they were doing, certain that anyone in those other ships (and why did the Adjutant keep getting the feeling that those other ships were *empty?*) would turn tail and disappear as quickly as the dirty saucer had done as hour and a quarter before.

They had just lobbed five fast shells at a snow-white saucer with purple markings, when the dirty saucer re-appeared.

Flick!

He was back, that hairy alien in the dirty, stained toga. He was back in the same spot he had vacated, almost directly above the General's batteries.

The pillar rose, and the General watched stunned as the metal top slid off the pillar, and the alien stepped out. He stepped onto the top

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of the ship, and they saw the gash in the hull had been repaired. Caulked with some sort of black sticky stuff that stuck to the alien's clawed feet as he walked along the top of the saucer. He carried a thick, gun-like object in his hands, cradled against his massive chest.

Then he screamed something in a voice like thunder. They could hear it only roughly, for it was in a guttural tongue. Then he switched to English, and screamed again, in more detail.

The General strained his ears. His hearing had never been the best, but the Adjutant heard, it was clear to see, from the look of horror on his face, seconds before he dove away from the anti-aircraft gun, rolled over several times and sprinted out into the desert. The General hesitated only a moment before following, but that was enough.

The alien turned the gun-like object on the batteries, and a roar and a flash sent the metal screaming skyward, ripping and shredding Bodies were flung in every direction, and a blue pallor settled across the landscape as a thirty foot crater opened where the battery had been.

The General felt himself lifted, buffeted, and thrown. He landed face forward in the ditch, and saw his arm land five feet away. He screamed. He screamed again and in a moment Alberts was beside him, dragging him away from the area of destruction. The alien was standing spraddle-legged atop his machine, blasting, blasting, scouring the Earth with blue fire.

The alien shouted something in English again, and then he stepped into the pillar, which lowered into the ship once more. A few seconds later the ship flicked away, and materilized in the sky ten miles off, above the air base.

There was more blasting, and the blue pallor lit the sky for a full half hour. Then the saucer *flicked!* and was gone. A few moments later the blue pallor—fainter yet, but strengthening all the time—was seen twenty miles further on, washing Las Vegas.

Flick! Flick! Flick!

And a dozen more saucers, dirtier than the first, materialized, paused a moment as though getting their bearings, then *flicked!* away.

For the next hours the blue pallor filled the sky, and it was easy to see the scouring was moving across the planet systematically.

The General's head was cradled in his Adjutant's lap. He was sinking so rapidly there was no hope at all. His left side had been scorched and ripped open. He lay

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there, looking up at the face of the once-dapper Adjutant, his eyes barely focusing. He was panting, "I...c-couldn't hear...what he s-said, Al-berts. W-what...did...he... say?"

The General's eyes closed, but his chest still moved. Though the blustering fool had caused the death of a world, still he was dying, and there was no sense letting him carry that guilt with him, Alberts felt.

"Nothing, General. Nothing at all. You did your very best, sir."

Then he realized the last "sir" had been spoken uselessly. The General was dead.

"You did your best, sir," the Adjutant spoke to the night. "It wasn't your fault the attendant picked us."

"All the alien said was that there were destructive pests in this parking lot and he was one attendant who was going to clear them out even if he had to work overtime for a century."

The words faded in the night, and only the blue pallor remained. Growing, flashing, and never waning.

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 19th day of September, 1956.

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ugly earthling

by...LEE CHAYTOR

Drax could not communicate with the average human—but he *could* communicate with this lonely and strange girl.

My alien was different.

He wasn't a supercivilized saint who came to warn our world to mend its ways, or a giant spider or slug, or an Invader with a ray gun. Drax wasn't like any of those. I kept trying to tell people... And when they went out gunning for him, so many angry frightened men in the darkness of the hills, I even showed Major Brett what Drax had given me. When the Major asked me why Drax had given them to me, I couldn't answer—not till the very end. But I guess you'd say that was another story.

I know all the patterns of Alien Visitor stories: why shouldn't I? Reading is the only thing they taught me, and Science Fiction is the closest I can get to the kind of work my father and brothers are doing. Being the only girl in a family of four brilliant men isn't what the women's magazine writers would have you think. My menfolk don't twinkle at each other over their pipes when I mistake a cyclotron for a condenser. My father never discusses his work with

This is the sensitive story of a man—yes, a man—who comes across space, searching for something that is the last thing the angry frightened men would expect him to search for! Definitely not the usual Alien Visitor story, this is the story for those among us who are certain, after long exposure to Hollywood, that it will be a monster who will crawl out of that spaceship once it lands. But can we be quite sure?

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me. Once when I came into the lab to see what kept them all so busy, Father shouted to my brothers,

"Get that freak out of here before she blows us all up!"

I'm not complaining. They have every reason to dislike me. They all worshipped my mother, who was beautiful and laughing and tiny. It killed her to have me. I was too big then and I'm too big now. Really too big. I'm over six feet and still growing. And then, of course, there's my feet...talipes, they call it. Clubfoot. Both of them. It can't be corrected. The specialist told my father it was a most unusual bone malformation.

But it isn't only my looks. I don't know how to pronounce a lot of the words I read, so I get nervous and talk very slow and stammer. My family are so busy with really important things—scientific discoveries and all—that you can't blame them for getting impatient with my stupidity. It used to embarrass my brothers.

There was a nurse once—but she annoyed my father, nagging him for things for me. He told her every time he looked at me he rmmbrd my dad mother. Then there's the caretaker, Lute. He's old and crabby and deaf and doesn't like to be bothered. I wear my brothers old clothes. It doesn't matter—no one sees me anyway. After I learned to read I quit going to school. The teacher was sorry. She said I learned very fast. She was the only one who ever thought so.

I grew up in the Palos Verdes hills in a sprawling old barn of a place that my father built out there years before the area got fashionable. My brothers went away to college and later to teach, but they always came back to experiment in the lab. One or other of them was usually home, so they kept the cupboard and pantry stocked, and ate when they thought about it. I did too.

As the district developed and the first houses were built, women and children began to appear along the roads and in the medows. I kept out of sight, going deeper into the hills. I knew I didn't look like they did. I watched the women, and tried to fix my clothes like theirs, but it wasn't easy. One day I said to Lute:

"I'm going to visit neighbors."

He scowled. "Mr. Cardel won't like it."

I got ready. First I washed my hair and combed most of the burrs out of it. Then I took the colored tablecloth my youngest brother Ted brought home. I cut a hole in the middle of it and put it on like a skirt. Then I cut the sleeves off Ralph's lab coat. I tied one of Roger's ties around my head to hold my hair down. When I was finished I looked in the mirror.

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It didn't look very pretty but it was better than the too-tight jeans and T shirts.

It was a long walk to the nearest house. I stood by the fence, looking in. Near the house a mother and two little boys, a baby and a dog were playing, laughing over something the baby was doing. The mother glanced up and saw me watching them. The smile went off her face as she stared at me.

I had planned what to say: Good afternoon. I am Vigo Cardel's daughter. I am so glad you have come to live here...Something like that. But the alarm and displeasure in her mind came to me like a pushing away and I began to stammer as I always do when I try to talk to people.

"Goo-goo-daternoon. Viggggg...Cardel—"

The little boy laughed. His mother turned nervously to silence him before she said, "What do you want? Are you hungry?"

The older boy crowed, "She's a gypsy. A real horrible gypsy. She'll steal you out of your bed because you laughed at her, Timmie. You'll have to wash all the pots and pans in the gypsy camp—"

"Be quiet, Donald! You're frightening your brother."

The little Timmie was crying and clinging to his mother. I came closer, anxious to tell him that I wasn't going to hurt him. The mother saw me and cried out sharply. The dog growled and began to bark. I tried to speak louder, to make them hear me above his barking. Donald threw a stone at me. Then he set the dog on me.

It bit me. I didn't mean to hurt it. I just wanted to get it off. Then they were all running and screaming. I went away.

My father was home that week. He was very angry with me.

"Why can't you keep out of sight? Surely you know by now how you affect people?"

I took a big breath. This was important. I said very carefully, so the words would come out right. "How-do-I-affect-people?"

He stared at me for a minute and then said something that sounded like "Tschah!" He went back to the lab and slammed the door.

From then on, I kept out of sight. I spent most of my time in the high meadows, curled up in a deep, cup-shaped depression. I didn't even want to read any more. I would lie in the long hot golden grass and insects would hum and buzz and the sun would make the tight blue sky ring like a soundless gong above me. Or maybe that was only my heart, beating. I would whisper sometimes, all the things I wanted to say to people, and after a while it got so I thought I could hear them answering.

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One day the sound of voices got so real I lifted my head above the rim of the depression. Two young men were coming up the hill, talking and laughing. One of them noticed me and threw out a hand to stop his companion. They both stared at me for a long time. They were beautiful. Their black hair shone in the sunlight like a blackbird's feathers. They were wearing bright colored shirts open at the throat and their skins gleamed with sweat. They came slowly toward me, till their heads were level with mine across the rim of the depression.

"Get a load of big Red," said the smaller of the two. "And I do mean load!"

The glittering black eyes of the other went to my shoulders and chest. "She ain't so bad, Louie. The giant economy size might have its advantages..."

Louie grinned admiringly. "You figure all the angles, Dooch. What's the word?"

Dooch said softly, "Why don't you round up the gang, Louie? Big Red an' me will be waitin' for you here—all nice an' cozy. Eh, Red?"

I came to my feet slowly, towering above them. I started to climb out of the depression. Their smiles faded. Then Louie squealed like the children had done. I looked at him. His bulging eyes were on my feet. His face swivelled up to mine and he made a queer gesture with his fingers like two little horns. From his lips spilled a stream of Italian.

"Can it," snapped Dooch, glaring at him. But Louie turned and leaped down the slope, stumbling, falling scrabbling up and on again. Dooch backed cautiously away from me. "I'm not chicken," he muttered, "but what gives with you?" His voice held a sort of raspy warmth, like sandpapering your skin. My hands went out to him.

"Please," I whispered, "please don't go."

He shook his head warily. I took a step toward him, then my bare feet slipped on the matted golden grass and I fell. When I got my head up, he was gone.

I stayed in the little hollow until after dark, just lying there, staring up at the blazing blue, till it softened into night and I saw the beautiful bright stars. One of them seemed to come closer, trailing a white-hot plume of fire. I crawled out of the pit then and began to make my way to the house.

The lab was a blaze of light. The door was open. I went in. Father and the boys were clustered around the telescreen. A man was talking:

"*—positively been confirmed that the object is a non-ter-*

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restrial craft, a space ship. It has not responded to our signals, but has set up an orbit roughly three miles above the surface of the earth. Military authorities are continuing to attempt communication...".

I caught my father's arm as he turned away from the screen.

"I must talk," I began.

"To you."

"Why?"

It surprised me. I wasn't ready for that question. I tried to straighten out my thoughts into words. The youngest of my brothers, called Ted, said "Why not?"

It was my father who was surprised now.

"You think it worth while to examine the thought processes? None of us is a psychiatrist, and I fail to see how science could be served—"

My brother interrupted. "I didn't mean science—that is—she is one of us."

My father said coldly, "I cannot accept that. A freak, a travesty—"

"She is a woman," said my brother awkwardly.

"No more woman than the cows in the field or the cat that keeps the lab free of mice. To try to make more of her would lead to pain for all involved." He walked away and slammed the door. My brother Ted said something under his breath. Roger snapped at him.

"Are you nuts? Can't you see Dad is still breaking his heart over Mother?"

I crept away while they talked. I went into the Common room. Above the big black mouth of the fireplace was The Picture. This was Mother—smiling, beautiful, dainty, beloved. Even dead sixteen years, she was more a part of the family than I ever could be. I fumbled blindly for the poker. I lifted it, drew it back—

There was such a blast of hatred from my father in the doorway behind me, that my head ached. "Put that down," he said, "and get to your room. I'm sending you away in the morning."

I dropped the poker and went out the other door. The smell of hate in the room sickened me. I had to get out of it. In the darkened kitchen I rested my head against the cold white top of the refrigerator. It hummed and trembled, busy and comforting. I felt my father grieving in the Common room, loving the picture, and I could not be angry with him. I would not go away to the place he had in mind, though, so I opened the back door very gently and slipped out into the darkness.

I slept in the high meadows that night. I returned late the next day, when the family had all driven off in their cars. Lute was scrub-

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bing the kitchen floor as I came in the back door.

"Your pa was lookin' for you," he said.

I made a gesture. "Hungry." I went to the cupboard. My bare feet made small muddy circles on the wet linoleum. Lute grunted angrily and snapped his fingers to get my attention. Then he pointed to my feet.

"Where's them shoes I made you?"

I shrugged. I kept losing the prickly felt pouches he had made to cover my misshapen feet. He glared at me, g r a b b e d up his pail and slopped out. "Your pa'll be back," he growled over his shoulder.

I tried to eat but I wasn't hungry after all. The bad feeling inside kept growing and hurting. From the Common room came a high, excited voice. I went to look in the door. Lute was watching the news. The announcer was shouting something about mysterious disappearances,

"—the girls all reappeared shortly in a dazed condition, completely unharmed—I repeat, they were not harmed in any way. None of them has been able to tell what happened... The army announces all leaves cancelled. Return at once to your stations—"

I went outside and up to the high meadows. I thought I would stay there until I was dead, like the dog I read about who wouldn't leave his master's grave. My thinking was very twisted. I admit it. For the first time, self-pity was warping my mentation, so I could even find it possible to envy a dead dog its human connection. As I lay in the sunset, I thought about relationships and loyalties until I began to feel very queer. The grass within the hollow was warm but I began to shake with chill. There was a whining like a giant top above me. I opened my eyes.

Hovering above me was a whirling, shining wheel. The sound was coming from it. It slid off sideways as I stared, and came to earth beyond the rim of the depression. In a moment there was a clang, like a big bell. Then I heard footsteps a p p r o a c h i n g. I closed my eyes. The sounds stopped above me, at the ehge of my resting place. An enormous shadow cut off the sunlight.

I did not open my eyes. Whoever it was would go away soon, running and slipping and stumbling like all the others. I extended my hideous feet into view, the sooner to be alone again.

Someone uttered a soundless question—a gentle tentative probing. I turned on my face and wept, but as the tears flowed, with my mind I was remembering the quality

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of that thought—not revulsion, not rejection...

And now steps, very soft but heavy. And a presence kneeling beside me—and a gentle pressure on my hair, stroking. I whirled over—

The Alien was kneeling beside me, looming above me, cutting off the light of the sinking sun with his enormous shoulders. His presence was a closeness—a comfort. That was the first wonderful thing. And then he was big—bigger even than I. Lying there at his knees, for the first time I felt acceptable, small, compressed awarely into a form, held together inside my skin like a person. I searched for the word. *Integrated.* He was accepting me as a whole person—there was a tinge of pleased admiration in his thought, as though *I* were small and delicate and—to him—appealing!

I raised my eyes to his face. He was smiling at me, his teeth very white in a reddish-brown face. His eyes were like the metal retorts in the lab, coppery, and they were on me—warm and friendly and eager. I stared at him, thoughts in a chaos. The closefitting suit he wore was of fine metallic mesh and covered all his bocy except his face. His hands were in delicately articulated metal gloves, and his feet... I stared at them, shock and disbelief struggling with a new feeling of hope.

The Alien's legs, strong and shapely in their metallic covering, tapered down to gilded *hooves!* I blushed. The Alien laughed softly. And the most wonderful thing of all happened. *He answered my thoughts with his own!* It was like suddenly finding someone who could speak, in a country of mutes. My own thoughts tumbled over each other in a surge of answering. He laughed again softly and took both my hands in his. He helped me to rise. My head did not quite reach his shoulder. I could not meet the searching of his eyes. Clear and demanding his thought came through the dusk to my mind:

"You are not like the others—the little dwarfed ones with the flipper feet. Are you native to this planet?"

"I answered, "I am of this world."

He thought gently. "Have you promised your body or mind to any of the males?"

My mind shrank from the question, but I answered, "As for my body, no one wants it. All their minds are closed to me, as mine to them."

There was eagerness in his mind.

He opened a small case linked to his belt and took out two small golden plates with raised rims. He smiled at me, softly, eyes glowing.

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Then he took my foot in his warm hands and placed a shining plate on it. It was like a living thing—soft, firm clinging.

As his hands manipulated, it fitted my foot like a glove. He took the other plate and set that upon my other foot.

"What—what is this?" I stammered.

"A gift," he began, taking my hands again. I jerked them away.

"Listen!" I commanded. A plane was swooping low over the hills. As it passed us it banked sharply, circled and thrust down a searchlight beam. It picked out the wheel-ship. The plane shot off toward the distant airport.

"You must go at once. They have radio—will report your ship."

"I have nothing to hide," he thought proudly.

"You don't know how ruthless humans can be when they are afraid," I told him. Far away from the city, the wail of sirens began. *"Go!"*

"I wish you to live and be happy," I said. His hands held mine.

"I am called Drax. I must meet with the males of your family. My purpose in coming here— There is something of importance I must get from your father or from one of your brothers." His thoughts at this point were veiled from me. It was a familiar feeling, yet how much more painful from this man than from anyone ever before. For I had been in complete communication with another being for the first time in my life, and to be excluded now... I put my face in my hands. The Alien must need scientific data, help perhaps, from my family. I raised my head but did not meet his eyes.

"Go, now. Come to my father's house after midnight." I gave him the directions.

"You will have to be there, also, to translate for me. I cannot communicate with any of your race except you." He ran with great strides to his craft and within a minute had skimmed up out of sight, a brighter star against the night.

I RAN into the army's dragline before I got to the road. Since I had been in the contaminated area, I was placed under "Protective arrest" and taken back to the home I had never planned to see again. All the while they were quizzing me before my father and brothers came I said little. My mind was filled with the wonder of the presence of such as Drax in the universe.

When my father came he was very angry. He had been taken from the middle of a lecture and brought at a high speed to his house, only to

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discover that the great emergency consisted of—myself.

"What crack-brain dreamed this up?" he stormed at the Major in charge. "I'm snatched from the platform, dragged at illegal speeds through the night, told nothing and now I find you suspect this—this unfortunate child of some sort of interplanetary espionage. Ridiculous! Surely after five minutes conversation with her you can see what she is!"

The Major looked at my father as if he did not like him. "She hasn't said much of anything. She was seen by two reliable witnesses, standing near a large circular craft with a being in a metallic suit. Both craft and being have disappeared."

My father snorted. "Hysterical delusions! I'm surprised an officer of our army would be taken in by such childish-"

The Major held out the golden plates. "We took these from her. She says the alien gave them to her as a gift. Do they look like delusions?"

My father stared at the plates, wordless.

The Major snapped, "Damned if I don't think you're all in it!" He called over his shoulder, "Captain, keep this place under maximum guard. Patrols under cover. If the craft attempts to land, let it, but secure any person who leaves the craft."

"You *believe* this nonsense?" frowned my father.

The Major looked at the plates. The clock ticked loudly in the silence. Eleven-thirty. I had told Drax to come after twelve. I clenched my fists and concentrated on sending out warning thought waves.

"*Look at her!*" The Major's voice startled me so I snapped my eyes open and stared at him. "She was signalling," he explained, scowling. My father walked over to me.

"Is there any truth in this officer's accusations?"

I closed my eyes again and tried to resume the warning thoughts. My father raised his hand and struck my cheek.

"Answer me, you-!"

My younger brother Ted, caught his arm. Then he came close to me and touched my shoulder with awkward pity. He faced the Major scornfully. "Why can't you let her alone? She's not in league with any alien power—how could she be? She's like a child, for all she's so big. I won't have her tormented—"

The Major permitted himself a grim smile. "The only person who's laid a hand on her is her father."

"Take her away with you," said my father. "Examine her to your heart's content—and

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small good it'll do you."

"Very tired," I said. They all looked at me. "I am tired," I repeated slowly.

"She can have my room," volunteered Ted, quickly.

"What's wrong with her own?" said the Major sharply. "She does live here?"

My father glared at Ted. "I had the caretaker pack her things today. I intended to send her to—a sanatarium. Her bed can be made up again—"

"Are you willing to accept full responsibility for her conduct?" snapped the Major. "She's our only contract with the monster, and you can bet we'll guard the house, but we haven't figured out yet how she signals to the Aliens. If she brings some kind of a raid down on us—"

"I'll sit with her," said Ted gently. "I'm sure you're wrong—"

I tried very hard to think straight and strong. Drax planned to come here to get my family's help. The army man was so nervous he would probably fire on sight, with his talk of Aliens and 'monsters'. I was not getting any response from Drax, mentally. There was just one thing left to do.

"I will go with Major... show him where to meet Alien...get soldiers quickly...."

They were all staring at me. I looked only at my father, trying to will him to agree to my going. The Major nodded his head. "That makes sense. We know she's the only one who's contacted him and remembers anything about it. It's most probable she's arranged to meet him again." He went out into the hall, calling orders to his men. I turned quickly to my father.

"His name—Drax," I whispered urgently. "Like you—scientist. He will be here tonight. Needs help from you and my brothers. I will lead soldiers away—"

"Why bother with all this elaborate hocus-pocus? I can soon find out if this alien is a scientist, as you claim. If he is, I'll vouch for him to the military—"

I stamped my foot. "Soldiers are all very frightened. When they see him they will destroy."

My father set his lips. "That I should be cursed with stupidity and childish melodramatics at a time like this! The man has only to declare himself—prove himself a rational being with a harmless motive for being here—"

"He .cannot .communicate with humans!"

"Then how do you pretend to be so familiar with his plans?"

"It is as though I could hear his thinking in my mind," I groped to explain

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that glorious sense of sharing.

"Extra-sensory perception?" suggested Ted, eagerly.

"Some form of hypnosis, more likely," my father said. He looked at me speculatively. It was maddening to me that they should be so calmly discussing the matter, when every moment Drax was drawing closer to the trap.

"I find it difficult to believe that she should be in communication with a non-terrestrial being," Ralph objected. "Granting there are any such."

"You suggest that such a one, a scientist, would hardly be likely to choose a mind like hers when there are trained, high intelligences trying to establish contact with him?" my father considered the matter. "Yet the trained intelligences might not be aware of the possibility or the method of such communication."

"There's those chaps at Duke University," Ted put in.

"Why this girl?" my father mused.

"Perhaps because I understand him," I said desperately.

"You?"

"Why not? He is alien in form. He cannot talk to you. Everyone is afraid of him because they do not understan him. They are cruel. It has been so with me, always."

"But you are different—" began my father uncomfortably.

Anger was making the words flow out of my mouth faster than ever in my life. Or maybe part of it was Drax with his mind like a strong gentle hand reaching into mine. Anyway, I burst out:

"Is wanting to be needed and loved different? Is gentleness and kindness and respect different? Drax has these feelings—I have sensed them in his thoughts. I have lived with these hungers all the days of my life. Could I mistake them? Inside, we have needs like yours and hopes and dreams....Only the shell is different. But that is enough for men..."

My father did not meet my eyes. "Call the alien to you. Bring him here. I'll try to protect him."

"I will not have him trapped and laughed at and hated as I have been. I cannot trust any of you. I will lead them away from here. When he comes you must help him to escape—"

"That's all I need to hear," broke in the Major from the doorway. Behind him stood two soldiers with guns drawn and pointed at us. "Confine the whole family in one room. Post guards outside the door and windows. All lights out except in this room. Alert

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all personnel to keep silent and well-hidden till the alien is safely inside. I'll personally break the neck of any man who warns him away by so much as an audible breath."

When they had locked us in father's room in the dark, I said softly, "I am going to get away and warn him."

Ted was at the window, "There's only one guard out here."

"I advise against your doing anything foolish," said my father. "Let him come here. Surely we are all rational beings—"

"Have you a weapon in this room?" interrupted Ted.

My father said, "Don't be a fool."

I went to the window and opened it quietly. A soldier came head and shoulders into the opening, gun pointing.

"You won't shoot me," I said quietly. "I'm only one who can talk to the alien."

"We don't aim to do much talking," whispered the soldier. Now shut up so you don't warn him away."

I reached out and jerked his gun. He fell toward me. I held his head against my chest. Ted helped me pull him into the room. We gagged and tied him. I went out through the window. Ted slid after me.

I don't know whether the soldiers heard us leave. They'd been ordered to be quiet, and they were. We ran along the roads to the high meadows, our feet thudding dully in the soft grasses. After a while Ted gasped,

"Slow down a bit, will you?"

I stopped, to listen. At first there was only his heavy breathing and the distant rumble of the city. A dog barked in the valley. Then a man's voice, calling something. I began to run again. When I got to the hollow where I had met the alien, I sank to my knees and put my head in my hands.

"Danger!" I thought at him. "Go quickly. Danger!" I swept the night for a response. There was nothing. Far below us there were shouts and the sound of a gunshot. I redoubled my efforts. Ted caught my shoulder, shook it.

"Look!"

The wheel of Drax was coming down on us, whining softly. In a moment he stood beside us. Drax did not address his thoughts to me, but to my brother.

"Say to him," he commanded me, *"Why have you brought this girl to me?"*

My brother said, "Tell him I wanted you to come.'

I did so, then broke in, "Oh, Drax, the soldiers are after you, as—"

He sent a thought full of reassurance. "Tell your brother it is well. This is the way

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of my people. To the males of the woman's family we come; the one who loves her best must give her to us."

In a daze I repeated this message, then added, "No one loves me. I do not understand this—"

Drax: "Your brother loves you. His heart is tender."

Myself: "But why do you want me? I'm not a scientist—"

Ted: "Don't be a stupe, Sis. The guy's making you an honorable offer...."

I stared from one to the other in the dim starlight. Both of them were smiling at me. Ted walked over and grinned up at the huge Drax. "Tell him I think he seems like a worthy young man—he's so big I don't dare say anything else! Tell him, as your closest relative, I hereby give away the bride."

When with trembling unbelieving mind, I had conveyed this message, Drax thought solemnly:

"I will truly protect and care for this woman all the days of my life. I will explore with her the utmost delights of love; I will protect her children. She will be honored in my clan." He held my hand in his enormous fist as I repeated the words to Ted.

There was more. "Tell your brother that I can never bring you back to this planet. Long across the black of space I have sought such a one as you to be my mate, for the Overlord's son must always go in search of a woman of different race, that the blood of the People may be diversified, and therefore enriched, according to The Great Law—"

Sirens began to wail in the distance, and powerful search-beams crossed the sky. Ted pushed me gently toward Drax.

"The Injuns are on the warpath. Tell Gabby here to get going." Drax clasped my brother's hand. Ted winced, said 'ouch' and patted my shoulder gently. "Best of luck, kid. Have fun. And name one of them after me, huh?"

Drax caught me to his breast and leaped for the port of the wheel ship.....

Now we approach my new world—Home. I shall finish this account and, sealing it in a capsule, send it on a trace beam back to the hollow in the high meadow.

I think that Ted will come there, sometime, to remember me.

MONSTER-IN MARTIAN-is defined as biped with two eyes.

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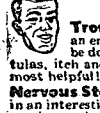

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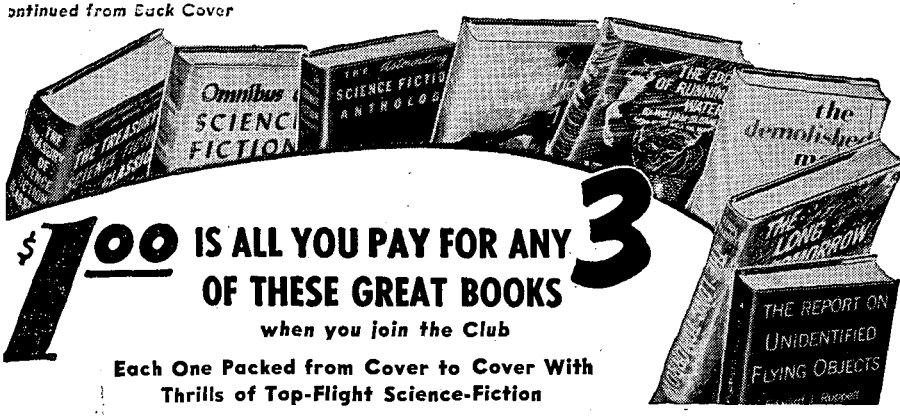

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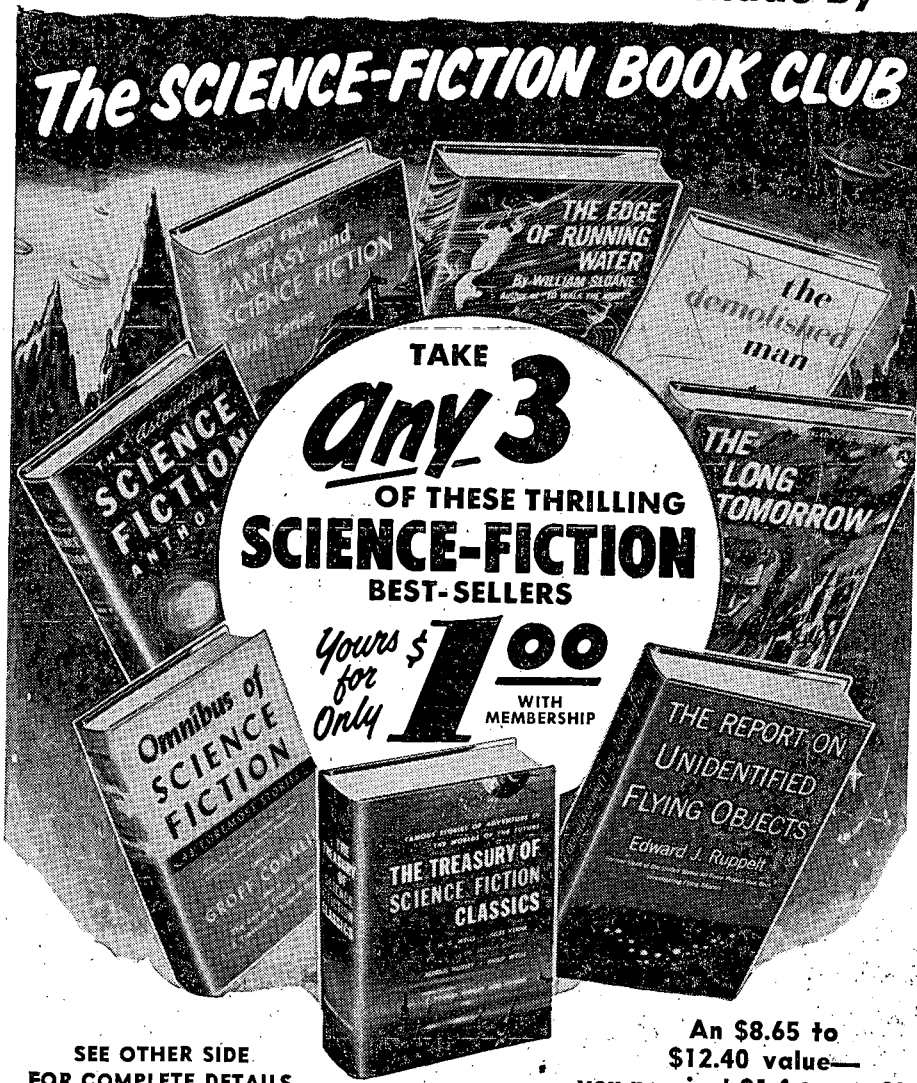

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